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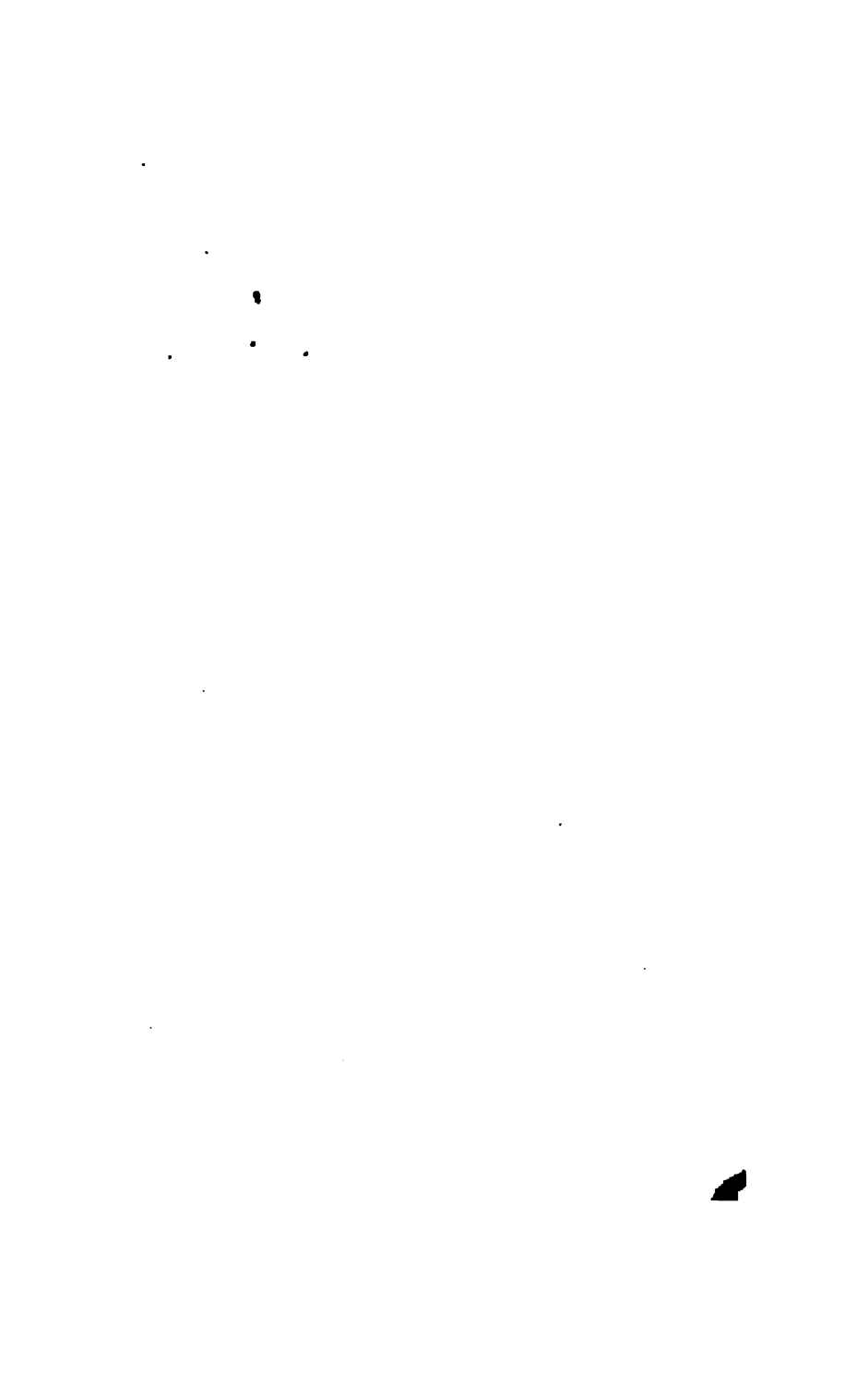
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The Gospel Message:

• A

SERIES OF ORIGINAL SERMONS,

FOR ALL THE

SUNDAYS AND PRINCIPAL HOLY DAYS,

FROM THE

FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT

TO THE

FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT.

EDITED BY

THE REV. FREDERICK GEORGE LEE, S.C.L., F.S.A.

INCUMBENT OF ST. JOHN'S, ABERDEEN, AND DOMESTIC CHAPLAIN TO THE
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P R E F A C E.

THE Publisher of *The Gospel Message* having determined on bringing that serial to a conclusion with the Third Part, and wishing to publish the Parts issued in a Volume, has requested the Editor to write a few lines in preface.

The Editor's main object has been to put dogmatic theology into a popular and practical form : and, while rendering the various discourses attractive both by style and illustration, to put forward for acceptance many neglected portions of the Christian faith. He has, likewise, aimed at great simplicity of language and plainness of speech. Whether any success on these points has been attained, he leaves his readers to determine.

All the Sermons are written by himself, except four. Those for Septuagesima and Sexagesima Sundays are from the pen of an eminent Scottish Clergyman. That for Ash Wednesday is by the Vice-Provost of one of the most renowned Collegiate Establishments in the Church of Scotland; and that for the First Sunday in Lent, by a Fellow of one of the oldest Collegiate Foundations at Oxford. To all of these, for their kindly assistance and able contributions, he returns his very cordial thanks.

F. G. L.

LUNSFORD, NEAR MAIDSTONE.

Feast of the Epiphany, 1860.

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THE
G O S P E L M E S S A G E.

The First Sunday in Advent.

THE NECESSITY OF REPENTANCE.

“The night is far spent, the day is at hand; let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.”—ROMANS xiii. 12.

ANOTHER ecclesiastical year has passed away and Advent is once more upon us. The solemn seasons commemorative of our Blessed Lord's earthly life—Christmas, Epiphany-tide, Lent, Holy Week and Easter—have again come and gone. Ascension time, Whitsuntide and the Trinity season had their special teaching likewise, and now, through God's mercy, another Advent is here, with all its solemn lessons, reminding us of the shortness of time, of the certainty of death, and, more especially, of the Second Coming of our Saviour Jesus Christ.

If we look around on the face of Nature, we shall not find indications wanting that

a certain end of all things is sooner or later to be looked for. The seasons come and go in their appointed order, and their progress is rapid. The chariot wheels of Time stay not. A few Sundays ago and autumn was upon us; now the ripening corn-fields of harvest-time are passed and gone. Now the fields are brown and the trees are leafless; the grain is garnered and the whole aspect of Nature is altered, speaking eloquently of that change which changes not, and reminding us that here we have no continuing city, but should seek one to come.

And, as the most effectual means of doing this, we find placed before us, in the Epistle from which the text is taken, the actual necessity of immediate and faithful repentance. The entire passage contains such exhortations and advice as every individual Christian requires to have continually sounded in his ears. If man is slumbering, and remains in a state of apathy, indifference, or deadly sin, forgetful of the calls from God of past years, he needs to be informed of the speedy departure of the night watches, and of the coming of the Son of Man. "Now it is high time to wake out of sleep:" now, before more sins are added to the catalogue:

now, while God is calling, and His Blessed Spirit is pleading for repentance, acceptance, pardon and grace : now, before the tree is cut down at God's command, because it brings forth no fruit, and cumpers the very ground on which it is planted. O, my beloved brethren in the faith, let us earnestly, and with God's help, consider impartially our present position. He calls, shall we not answer ? He exhorts, shall we continue to stop our ears ? He tells us how we may ease ourselves of the sin-load upon our souls, shall we refuse to listen ? He points out the way, Who is both the Way, the Truth and the Life, shall we decline to imitate Him or to strive to follow in His footsteps ? God of His infinite mercy grant that this present Advent may prove, to some amongst us, the re-commencement of a spiritual life, and the dawn of a brighter and a better day !

I. Our subject for this Sunday is "The Necessity of Repentance." Let us, therefore, try to discover how strongly it is placed before us by the words of the text. Saint Paul thus writes :—"The night is far spent, the day is at hand." And so it is.

Ever since the time at which Adam sinned, and lost his original justice, a spiritual darkness has overshadowed the whole world. Gloom, blackness and desolation have ever been. The light of God's Spirit was obscured. Man's heart became corrupt, his will crooked, his way uncertain. The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that would understand and seek after God; but they are all gone out of the way, they are altogether become abominable; there is none that doeth good, no not one. And though the promise of a Saviour, who should bridge over the chasm between earth and heaven, given by God Himself, when the Angel stood with his flaming sword at the gate of Paradise, was fulfilled in due time; yet the power of sin, the crooked wills of men, and the many acts of despite against God's Spirit, became, as it were, clouds to overshadow the world, and shut out from view the glory and merciful goodness of the Sun of Righteousness, our Lord Jesus Christ. The spirit of unbelief, which owned an almost world-wide influence in bygone days, is powerful and energetic and deadly still. "Except I shall see in His Hands the print

of the Nails, and put my finger into the print of the Nails, and thrust my hand into His Side, I will not believe." As it was with Thomas, so is it still. When our Blessed Lord first came upon earth, and was born of Mary, only the shepherds came to worship Him. In after-time, He had but a few followers, and they from the lowest ranks. The great majority were silently indifferent, if they did not persecute or defame. Here one, and there another, like the woman with the issue of blood, or the converted centurion on the first Good Friday, proved by their deeds as well as by their words that upon their hearts the Divine Light had fallen. With them it was night no longer, because they had received that great theological virtue, Faith, and could apprehend the Gospel Message, could look into things unseen. And though God of His infinite mercy, for the sake of Christ Jesus, and by the operation of the Holy Ghost, has set up in the world an institution,—even His Church, founded upon the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the Head corner-stone,—by which men might be brought from darkness to light, from the power of sin unto Himself;

it is to be feared that a small remnant only have faithfully co-operated with grace bestowed. Many are called, but few are chosen. The Gospel Message is ever being delivered. The first instalment of Grace in Holy Baptism is ever and always being imparted, and God is continually desiring that men should turn from their evil ways. He willeth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should be converted and live. This was His message through Saint John the Baptist, this was the burden of our Blessed Lord's parables and sermons, this the exhortation of His chosen Twelve. Repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. Let us eat and be merry, for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found. So, likewise, the Apostles preached repentance at Corinth, at Philippi and at Rome. And year by year likewise, ever since the first teachers of the Gospel were called to their heavenly reward, the same object has been had in view by the ministers and stewards of God's mysteries. Like them, they have preached repentance and remission of sins in the Name of the Lord Jesus. Like them, they have gone forth into the dark places of the earth to tell

of God's reconciliation with man through the Precious Blood of His Dear Son. Season by season, and opportunity by opportunity, at times of famine, pestilence and plague, at periods of sorrow and desolation, when the hearts of men were softened, they have spoken of the True Balm of Gilead, of the Great Physician of souls. They have exhorted to repentance, to a closer walk with God, and to sanctity. Advent by Advent, for many a long century, these very words of the text have been proclaimed from the Church's sanctuary,—“The night is far spent, the day is at hand.” And as the accumulating sins of years have multiplied in number, and deepened in dye, the night has grown darker than ever. Man, with deliberation and forethought, has preferred his own will to the adorable Will of his Maker. He had the power to choose, and has chosen. The scale is fallen, the balance is struck, and death rather than life has been finally selected. In a thousand ways such an end has been gained: by Pride, by Lust, by Envy, Hatred, Impurity and Sloth. Openly or in secret,—while the kindly world was gauging his character, and writing him down respectable and religious,—the worm

of sin was gnawing into the very vitals of his existence, and making him more and more a child of the devil. The Advent warning was sounded far and wide, but it was not for him, because self-satisfaction and the pleasures of sin engrossed all his hours and energies; and the enemy of souls took too good care not to reveal the future. Perhaps formal scepticism was the devil's cordial fellow-worker; and so the intricate web of evil became stronger and more secure. In such an instance as this, unless repentance intervenes, the end is certain and the punishment eternal.

The night is far spent. Who, then, can tell when the day, which is so near at hand, may break? It has been a long night and dark, but the morning seems to be near, and the first lines of light almost appear. Two thousand years, in round numbers, intervened between the Fall of our first parents, and the destruction of an evil world by the Flood. The same cycle passed from the time of Noah to the First Advent of Christ; and now, the centuries are gliding rapidly away. Eighteen have been, and are not; and the nineteenth is slipping from under our very feet. Time is, we clutch at it,

and it is gone. Our plans in early life, so many, and so certain of success, remain but schemes at best. We build air-castles, when earthly hopes seem to be deep-rooted, and when earthly joys appear lasting and bright; but they fade and pass away; and the years gather strength and numbers. Time grows old, while man only knows increasing weakness and infirmity. Ever, therefore, should we remember the words of the text, and lay the great truths contained in them to heart. The night is far spent, and the Bridegroom may soon arrive. Come when He may, His return will be sudden and unexpected, and then the end of all things will have arrived.

The night is far spent. What, therefore, should be attempted? Nothing less than a true and hearty repentance for past negligences and sins, and an earnest and hearty conversion to God. The hours are passing swiftly; death has to be prepared for at once; death, which may arrive at any moment, and then the particular judgment of every individual soul. Let us all remember, then, and especially so at this solemn Advent season, that the preparation for death should be regarded as

the greatest and most important business of life. Here, in this changing world, we are pilgrims and travellers across a desert, wending our way to another world, which is eternal. We are on our trial, but we can obtain grace to help in time of need. We require to be guided, but we have a Guide and a Friend, even the God-Man. Strength and refreshment after weariness may be ours, if we only ask in faith, nothing doubting, having repented of past sins, and resolved to serve God better for the future.

The night is far spent. Let us, therefore, no longer procrastinate. Now we have health and strength, offers of grace, time, opportunity: soon all will be numbered amongst the things that were, and the chances of salvation will have flown. Tempt God no longer by designing to live in sin, and hoping to die in grace. Never again put off the consideration of your soul's state, of your past sins, of your manifold transgressions; but begin the great work of repentance at once. Prepare for the end, by daily and fervent acts of devotion and contrition. Imitate David, and cry out to heaven, "Create in me a clean heart, O

God, and renew a right spirit within me.” Die daily to your sinful appetites and passions; to the love of the world, and, more especially, to your own self-love. Forget yourselves, and think only of Him Who is the Author of your being, and the Preserver of your lives; and, particularly, meditate upon the earthly Life and Passion of your Saviour Christ. Try to fathom the amazing depths of His boundless and everlasting love. Ponder, in every detail, over the joyful mysteries of His Incarnation, Birth and Childhood; the coming of the Angel from Heaven; the Visitation of Mary and Elisabeth; the Nativity at Bethlehem; the Presentation in the Temple, and the Mystery of the Boy-Christ, radiant with Divine Wisdom, sitting amongst the doctors in the Temple: and then pass on from the joys of His Childhood, to the sorrows He endured when He was three and thirty years of age; remembering ever that He suffered all for us men and for our salvation. Call to mind His Prayer and Bloody sweat in the Groves of Gethsemane; His scourging; His Crown of Thorns; the Bearing of His Cross; and, finally, His Three Hours’ Agony and Death upon the Hill of Calvary. Now

His sufferings are over ; Christ being dead dieth no more,—and He is pleading for you in Heaven, watching every action, weighing every motive, knowing every thought. With what patience does He wait ; with what amazing charity does He love ; what merciful and manifold offers of salvation does He continue to place before us ! Here on earth, though the Gospel is still preached, and though the powers of the Church energize,—powerful as ever, powerful as they were at Pentecost,—yet it is still night. The darkness of sin is around and about, and the evil and crooked wills of men are rife with mischief and death. Amid this tumult and confusion the cry comes :—Watchman, what of the night ? And the answer stands : The night is far spent, and the day is at hand.

II. And this brings us to the second part of the text—the breaking of the everlasting day. After the blackness and darkness of the later night watches, the day will surely break. The day is at hand. After Sin and Satan and Antichrist have done their worst to ruin souls, and to mar the efficacy of the grace of God ; when the faithful

have waited patiently, and the number of the elect are accomplished, then cometh the end. No more gloom and sorrow, no more sin and suffering then. The strife will be over, the warfare will be accomplished, the race will have been either lost or won. And remember that every recurring Advent brings us one year nearer to that time; and should impress us more and more deeply with the immense importance of preparing for it. And the great and rich reward set before us—if we take no higher line—should induce us to begin with earnestness the work that with so many has yet to be accomplished. If we die with all our transgressions upon us, in deadly unrepented sin, servants of the devil, braving God, and defying His laws, what will be our lot? Will the breaking of the day bring us joy or sorrow? Will the sight of the ransomed, clad in robes of white, and stamped with the seals of salvation and immortality, afford us any pleasure? Will the presence of Christ Jesus, once the Saviour of mankind, but now the righteous, unerring Judge of quick and dead, gladden our hearts? Will the fact that His Sacred Name has been so often upon our lips, and that, in the sight of

an admiring world, we have cried out, for the sake of its praise and approval, "Lord, Lord," serve our purpose then? Will the professions so ostentatiously made, of love for Christ, and cold respect for the laws and regulations of His Mystical Body, be then of any avail? Far otherwise; for when time has passed we shall see as we are seen, and know as we are known. Then, the miserable subterfuge, and the false excuse, shall appear to the assembled thousands, both paltry and untrue, and the reward of such shall be at hand,—even an utter alienation from Heaven and the redeemed, and the burning curse of an offended God. So, for such, will the breaking of the day bring a darker night and a lasting misery.

But for others, for those who have ever striven to imitate Christ, and to prepare for the Second Advent, the breaking of the Great Day shall be the commencement of their everlasting felicity. Their former toils shall be known no more: their earthly troubles shall for ever have passed away. The evil influence of the world, the flesh and the devil, shall cease to harass, discomfit and perplex. Temptation's power shall be powerless, and the peace of God shall be theirs. And all

this shall begin when the sentence of the righteous is proclaimed by the Lord of the whole earth. Then shall the poor become rich and the humble rejoice ; the publican shall obtain his reward, and Lazarus shall be comforted. Come, ye blessed children of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world : come from a long and tedious banishment to your own true country, to the paradise of God, the heavenly Canaan. Come from your earthly pilgrimage, where crosses and labours and dangers surround you, to your blessed and eternal home,—to the many mansions of my Father, to the House of Plenty and to the Fountain of Life. The winter is past, the rain is over and gone, the flowers appear on the earth, the time of the singing of birds is come. Should we not strive, then, to win for ourselves that rich benediction ? Should we not ever pray that Christ may at last draw us to Himself, unite us to Himself, and receive us into the very bosom of His goodness by that joyous word, Come ! O, thrice happy benediction, to be known as, and to become, blessed children of His Father by an everlasting union with Himself ! How much ought we to rejoice in

this prospect,—how earnestly to labour for the rest which endureth to everlasting life ! The day—that is, the day of Christ’s triumph in the ransomed, when the Fruits of His Passion are made manifest,—that day is at hand.

III. So much, then, for this point. We now come to the final words of the text : “ Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.” And this is the practical portion. This is the part that relates to deeds as well as to words, and, consequently, becomes the most difficult to accept and to act upon. So long as some amongst us are called upon merely to make professions, so long we are willing most complacently to listen ; but when some definite labour is recommended, and some particular step suggested, then we shrink from any progress even if we are not actually offended with the Gospel Message. Now, the plain duty which lies immediately in the path of the great majority is the necessity of repentance, and the particular mode of attempting this, is by scrupulously following the injunction just given from the writings of St. Paul :—“ Let us cast off the

works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light." The same Apostle, in his Epistle to the Galatians, tells us what these works of darkness, or works of the flesh, are. They "are these: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings and such like." There are few amongst us, it is to be feared, who do not in some form or another, either by thought, word or deed, make certain of these sins our own. To prove this, let us carry back our minds for one single year, from the present to the past Advent, and then ask ourselves, in singleness of heart, and with no double dealing or equivocation, whether or not we have indulged—and, may be, not once but frequently, and as a habit,—in some of these works of darkness? If so, there is no doubt as to what step we should take. Surely, The Necessity of Repentance is a question which we all admit to be good in theory, and with regard to other people; shall we not, then, on reflection, allow its value in practice, and that, too, with reference to ourselves? O, brethren in Christ, cast ye off the works of

darkness, and put on the armour of light. Turn away from sin with horror, abhorrence and regret. Sorrow deeply, sorrow earnestly, sorrow ever, for having so frequently offended a God so infinitely good in Himself, and so infinitely good to you. Let there be no faint purposes of amendment, let not only half your will be given up to God, but repent ye with all your heart, your soul, and your strength. Openly and secretly, by night and by day, in mind and intent, ye have often transgressed ; return, therefore, to your Heavenly Father, and He will hear your prayer. Say "I have sinned, I have grievously sinned, and am no more worthy to be called Thy son," and He will pardon and forgive. Cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armour of light. Look to Him and be ye saved, for He desireth not the death of a sinner.

Finally, then, let us remember to take unto ourselves the whole armour of God. Let us ask for the shield of faith, the breastplate of righteousness, and the sword of the Spirit, and then we shall have obtained the armour of Him, who is the Light of Light. Thus being prepared for the battle, if we fight bravely, we shall not fail of being

victorious. The foe may be powerful, but we shall not fall, for God is our help and strength in time of trouble. We shall be fighting under the banner of the Cross, and the Cross shall triumph at last. We are soldiers of the Crucified, and as He overcame Death, and Sin by Death, so we shall triumph over our enemies, sin and hell likewise. Therefore is our song, "Blessed be the Lord my Strength, who teacheth my hands to war and my fingers to fight; my Hope and my Fortress, my Castle and Deliverer, my Defender in Whom I trust." "Though an host of men were laid against me, yet shall not my heart be afraid; and though there rose up war against me, yet will I put my trust in Him." So, beloved, then let it thus be. An offer is before us at this very moment; let our selection be wise and good. Choose ye this day whom ye will serve. A few more years and the chance of choosing will have gone. A few more Advents and the end of all things will be here. For the worldly, the intervening years will be used for getting gain, for the founding of hopes, which, like the apples of Sodom, shall crumble to dust and ashes. Time and strength and energies will

be wasted for the sake of the world and its valueless concerns. And such houses, built on sand, shall infallibly fall at last. In the end our deeds shall be tried by fire. At the Second Advent the Books shall be opened, and the final sentence shall be pronounced. Then we shall see Christ face to face. God grant that it may be to hear from His lips the gracious word, Come! Christ, for the sake of His Passion, and by the operation of His Blessed Spirit, give us grace so to work here, so to pass the night of sin in this world, that we may gain our reward and rest at last, and share with Him in Heaven the abiding glories of the Everlasting Day! Amen.

The Second Sunday in Advent.

THE TIME OF REPENTANCE.

“ Behold, now is the accepted time ; behold, now is the day of salvation.”— 2 CORINTHIANS vi. 2.

No words could more forcibly or more pointedly put before Christians the absolute necessity of immediate repentance, than these of St. Paul to the Corinthians. The Apostle, who in his own person was a standing proof of the efficacy of Divine Grace,—having been, by God’s mercy, changed from being a persecutor of the Faith, to a preacher of repentance,—exhorts his Corinthian brethren to receive not the grace of God in vain ; urging, as a reason for so doing, that the period for repentance is the present. Now is the accepted time ; now is the day of salvation. And he did this with a power and success amongst the heathen nations of the then civilized world, which won for him the title of the Apostle of the Gentiles.

While sin remains the same, then, while the works of the flesh are so many, so

powerful and so frequently indulged in; while the influence of the devil is so extended and so world-wide; while such countless thousands sell themselves body and soul, for the sake of gain or position, praise or self-indulgence; surely these words are as applicable as ever. This is one clear reason why such is the case; and the second is, that, while sin is still making such havoc, while so many souls are being daily and hourly drawn into its deadly meshes, time is passing away; the hours are following each other in quick succession, and the Grave and Eternity are speedily nearing us all. A few years ago, and with each it was the time of youth. Its changeful seasons came steadily on, with their bright springs and their rosy summers, and passed as rapidly away. Only a glad memory of them lingers behind. And then followed the years of manhood,—alternating with sunlight and shadow,—and leading up silently to the solemn evening of life. Some have reached this point; some, as the phrase goes, stand with one foot in the grave; all shall find a resting-place there at last. Now, therefore, is the accepted time.

But these two especial reasons shall be

adopted and considered singly. Let us take them, then, in order, and so consider them:—

I. *The deep Influence and Universality of Sin.*—If we look around us, in our ordinary everyday life, we shall surely discover more than enough to satisfy us of the truth of this statement. Can there remain a doubt in the minds of any, either that the power of sin is world-wide, or that, more or less, at one time or another, every individual succumbs to its influence? Look at the misery and wretchedness, the pain, the sorrow, the desolation caused by self-indulgence, evil examples, and a neglect of the laws of God and His gracious promises. Look at the homes which are rendered lonely, the paths which are made crooked and darkened, the grey hairs which are brought down in sorrow to the grave. The adulterer and the fornicator, the man of the world and the sceptic, own an influence,—blighting and deadly,—and use it. They sow the seeds of sin, delighting the enemy of souls, and their rank and poisonous weeds spring up strong and abundantly, to overgrow the fair pasture of the Church of God. They spread the net, they lay the trap, and

thousands suffer. By day and night the abiding record is made, and the Books of God are being filled and prepared for final judgment. Every sin, great and small, is noted down, and every sin shall be made manifest at the Last Great Day.

And if from the outer world we look to ourselves, and turn our eyes inward, shall we not be compelled to admit that the influence of sin is both deep and universal? On coming to the use of reason, how speedily we forfeited our baptismal innocence! The warmth was chilled, the light was put out, when deadly sin was committed. From that moment our desire was not towards God, but towards the world. Too deeply, as step by step we made a descent, did we love the pleasures of sin,—too earnestly we sought after some earthly bauble,—too deliberately refused to listen to the pleadings of the Spirit of God. We chose our road, the broad and not the narrow path, and we have kept to it ever since. At the time of choice our intellects were clear, our minds were made up, our way was taken. The threatenings of God's anger availed not; the warnings of the Church were as nothing; because we had cast out the Holy Ghost,

and the venerable gifts and virtues by Him bestowed. Thus Faith became an alien to us, and a gross darkness hung around our path.

From the first sin, to the present hour, it is to be feared that too many have been daily adding sin to sin and evil to evil. Sins against God, against one's neighbour, against oneself. Sins of desire, of word and of deed. Sins of commission, of omission, of ignorance, frailty and malice. We have too often indulged in lying, impurity and anger. Our thoughts went astray continually, our prayers were offered with no attention or devotion, and became mere empty lip-service. Our confessions of sin were merely nominal,—only the utterance of a form of words—lacking both sincerity, repentance and amendment. And year by year, with too many, past sins have only been multiplied again and again; and corruption has become more corrupt. Our instincts and faculties, our senses and members have been too deeply defiled with repeated treasons against God's majesty and mercy, and we have continually perverted the manifold gifts of God against the Giver. Let us wait now, in this passing Advent,

during this present sermon, at this very moment, to pause and gather up the memories of bygone days, burdened with so black a cloud of transgressions. They come back to us clear and distinct. We would forget them, but we cannot. We would be unable to pierce the darkness of the sinful past, but it is denied to us, and the catalogue stands out awful in its length and character.

And when we begin to examine motives, and probe their depth, when we seek for cause and effect, the manifold aggravations of sin become more and more apparent.

For in addition to the depth of the malice which lies at the root of deadly sin,—simply from its opposition to the infinite goodness of God,—there are many other enormities which extend and multiply its guilt. One is the base ingratitude which aggravates every sin committed against God and His Christ. For He is our Creator, our Friend, our Benefactor. From Him we received all that we possess, whether riches, intellect or health. Daily His gifts are increased, and His blessings showered down. The sun rises, the rains descend, the dews fall, the earth yields her fruits. He protects us in danger, preserves and watches over our

path. And as to special grace, Christ died for us, regenerated us, and desires to pardon and forgive. He came down from Heaven to humble Himself and to shed His Blood ; He returned home again, to plead for us before His Father's Throne.

Again : the injustice of wilful sin is manifest in a direct violation of the right and title which God possesses to our love and obedience. For He made us, and He made us for Himself. He is the great King of all the earth. He purchased us for Himself, and marked us out for His Own. On our part we have been solemnly dedicated to Him and to His service. We have been made His children in time by adoption, that we might become, through grace and by doing His Will, His both for time and eternity. But the deliberate sinner flings aside all these considerations. He forgets or ignores God's goodness ; he fails to remember his own solemn pledge ; he withdraws himself from his Maker and Redeemer, and alienates from Him that which by right is His. He wilfully hands over that which is God's to the devil. His soul, though marked with a distinct character,—

the character of a child of God,—is given up to the enemy of souls. Solemn vows and engagements are altogether forgotten or despised; and sin, like a blighting canker-worm, is doing its work.

Furthermore: as in every deliberate deadly sin there is a breach of certain of God's commandments, so does a single sin engender many. Whosoever offendeth in one point is guilty of all. Whosoever turns away from the One True and Living God, and refuses to give Him the worship which is His due, is guilty of idolatry, by worshipping the creature, which is the object of the sin, rather than the Creator, God, blessed for ever. Such an one profanes His Name and blasphemes Him, if not in word, at least in deed and in fact, by treading His authority under foot. He dishonors the best of fathers. He is guilty of a murder of his own soul, and crucifies the Son of God afresh, putting Him to an open shame. He is also guilty of spiritual adultery, by prostituting to Satan his own soul, which before has been wedded to Christ. He is guilty likewise of theft and sacrilege, by taking away from God that which belongs to Him.

He bears false witness to the laws of God; and, finally, he covets that from which the law of God restrains him.

Thus, then, have we learnt something of the character and universality of sin. We have seen its influence upon the world in general, as well as upon individual souls, and ourselves, in particular. We have discovered in what manner the devil succeeds in first leading astray the unwary, and then in making them tenfold more the children of darkness. We have marked how link after link of his chain is forged and strung together to make security more secure; and how, at last, the yawning and bottomless pit becomes certain of its prey. Surely, therefore, we can entertain no doubt as to when we should repent. This, at least, is intelligible,—this, at least true, that “Now is the accepted time; that now is the day of salvation.”

II. But to consider this part of the subject more at length, viz.:—*The uncertainty and consequent value of Time*. Even the people and concerns of this world teach us a lesson here. The man who starts in life, with the firm-grounded intention of be-

coming wealthy and great, leaves no stone unturned to effect his object, and never loses sight of the high value of Time. Early and late he labours with vigour and determination. To him Time is money, and every moment is engrossed to enable him to accomplish the single aim in view. Day by day he toils with unflagging energy, and though trials, disappointments and vexations start up to mar his success, and years come and go, yet is he daily learning fresh lessons of the value of Time ; because the years of the aged are short, and the months pass rapidly and more rapidly away. So that in matters of buying and selling, of getting gain and of obtaining rewards, the value and importance of Time is fully admitted. Its fearful uncertainty, too, is admitted likewise. We may be here to-day, as the saying goes, and gone to-morrow. During one week a man may be hale and hearty, in mind and body, working with his accustomed powers, in the following he may have been called into the Presence of his Maker. A thousand accidents lie in his pathway ; and this is evident enough, from instances of everyday occurrence. Facts are more to the point than mere theories ;

and facts tell us this, preaching an eloquent lesson, and testifying to the truth of the text,—“Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation.”

But at this particular portion of the year, when the early seasons have come and gone, when the seed having been planted, the fruit has been cut down, gathered in and garnered, we are reminded by the very aspect of Nature of the fleeting character of Time. A year seems a long period by anticipation, but only a short span in retrospection. Now the year is growing old. A few months ago, and the fields were green with the rising blade, or golden with the ripening ear. A few months ago, and the flowers hung upon every hedgerow or spangled the fields with their bloom. Now all is changed. The skies are altered, the clouds drift gloomily athwart the sky, the streams are turbid, the flowers are withered, the fields are bare. And each change tells us that Time is short and Eternity near. This truth faces us at every step, and from every side: therefore, “Now is the day of salvation.”

And if the seasons of the year lead us, as it were, to a general contemplation of this

important truth, how much more forcibly and pointedly are we called upon to consider it by the distinct and definite lessons of the present season. Our Blessed Lord's Birth and Passion, His Resurrection and Ascension, have been brought before us during the progress of the Christian year. The round of festival and fast has taught us the particular dogmas of the Christian religion; and now we are called upon to meditate upon Christ's Second Advent. Well-nigh twenty centuries ago, He came on earth in humility, and returned to heaven, ascending in majesty and might. He came to suffer and to die. His promise that He would come again to judge both the quick and the dead is still unfulfilled. He waits as yet for the number of His elect to be accomplished. As yet He is pleading for the transgressions of mankind. Till Time ends He will be to us the Lamb of God Who taketh away the sins of the world; for He is ever presenting His Passion upon the heavenly altar, and pleading His Sacred and Adorable Wounds. When that merciful work may cease, when the end of all things may arrive, God alone knoweth; but this we know of a truth, that the Lord will

return as a thief in the night, and that then the Judgment will begin. Surely, therefore, if we would be ready for His Second Advent, we should gird up our loins, by a hearty repentance, and earnestly prepare ourselves for the Last Great Day, and this at once ; for we know neither the day nor the hour, therefore should we be always ready,—ever watchful to open when He knocks, having our lamps burning in our hand. “ Be ye, therefore, ready also,” is the exhortation of our Blessed Lord Himself. He perpetually inculcates it by the mouths of His ambassadors, as the only security against the dreadful evil of an unprovided death, and all those endless miseries, which are its unhappy consequences. Let us lay the lesson taught by these words to heart, therefore, so that we may profit by them, and meditate upon them day by day. Our Lord Himself has been gracious to each of us in countless ways and modes, during the past twelve months. He has waited for our repentance, while too many of us, perhaps, have walked with deliberation, deeper and deeper into the quagmire of sin. He has been patient, merciful and long-suffering ; but at the

important truth, how much more forcibly and pointedly are we called upon to consider it by the distinct and definite lessons of the present season. Our Blessed Lord's Birth and Passion, His Resurrection and Ascension, have been brought before us during the progress of the Christian year. The round of festival and fast has taught us that Christ

same time He has knocked at the door of thousands, who, but a twelvemonth ago, during the last Advent, were, in all human probability, as likely to live as ourselves. Daily they followed their calling, in health, in vigour, in security. Once or twice upon a Sunday, perhaps, they made their appearance in church. They were known to be of a good social position, respectable, moral and well-informed. They heard the warnings of former Advent seasons with a bland and placid satisfaction, or, perhaps, applied the lessons inculcated, to their neighbours on the right hand and the left. They knew the value of time in regard to the concerns of this life; but when the necessity of immediate personal repentance was placed before themselves, they shuffled off its responsibilities, and remained intact in their sin. They had a ready excuse upon their tongue, exactly applicable to their own position, and an excellent reason why a repentance in old age, or a death-bed repentance, would be all that they should feel called upon to attempt. They were young, or, at least young in comparison to many around them. As yet they had not neared the accustomed span of man's earthly

existence, or lived to see their children grown up. Their plans for the future were many, and that future was mapped out with precision. Thus were their consciences drugged with the delusions of Satan. So, when Christ knocked at the door, and they heard the astounding and heart-appalling message, "Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee," their everlasting misery unravelled itself with distinctness in a moment. From earth to the world unseen was but a single step. One moment, self-satisfied and secure, they were in the midst of their earthly occupations; in another, trembling with woe undescrivable, in the very presence of their God. O, change incomprehensible! when Time shall have passed away,—when earth with all its joys and sorrows, its graces and sins, shall be left behind,—and only eternity be ours. Surely, "Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation." God of His infinite mercy give us such a will and grace that we may repent at once, before it be too late; laying to heart the great truths of the Gospel, and beginning to work out our salvation with fear and trembling: so that a present change may

become the earnest of a future reward, and a walking with God here, gain for us a place in His mansions above, through Christ's merits, for ever hereafter.

Furthermore : if time passes speedily and opportunities of repentance shoot past us with rapidity, we should remember, as a still further inducement for considering the text, that possibly the end of all things is at hand. Wars, and rumours of wars, with all their multiplied evils, mighty political and religious convulsions, radical changes, plague, famine and pestilence, have been known in abundance during this present century, and have left their impress upon it. And though in almost every era of Christianity, there have been those who have imagined their own age to be the worst, and the farthest from God, yet every additional century of that era has brought the end nearer. The spirit of unbelief, too, is gaining strength, and where open unbelief would hardly be tolerated, an equally deadly spirit of indifferentism is rapidly making way. Look at its influence in our literature, in our politics, in our social economy. It has a system, plans, and policy ; and it does its work well. It leavens the minds of the

young, through specious appeals to the feelings or the imagination ; and occupies the place which should be filled with a higher and more ennobling principle. It is a system of negations, and consequently of direct opposition to the definite truths of the Gospel. So that while His Church is patronized, our Blessed Lord is virtually banished and forgotten. And amid all this the Babel tongues of contradictory teachers are heard louder and more loud. Each one has his self-invented nostrum. Knowledge is increased upon the earth ; but not such a knowledge as will make men wise unto salvation. “The floods have risen, O Lord, the floods have lift up their voice, the floods have lift up their waves. The waves of the sea are mighty and rage horribly ; but yet the Lord Who dwelleth on high is mightier.” And He shall come, in due time, to avenge Himself upon His enemies, and to claim His own. The storms for ever shall cease, the waves shall swell no more. He shall come in might and in majesty, with ten thousand times ten thousand angels, to gather together His elect from the four winds, and in the face of creation to reward every man according to his work. Now,

therefore, is "the accepted time" for repentance: "now is the day of salvation."

Once again: the remembrance of early teaching may bring to the minds of some the direct and definite warnings of Almighty God; and lead them to consider the necessity of a deep spiritual change. Noah preached repentance for years to an unwilling and unbelieving world, which soon afterwards suffered the penalty inflicted by God. Pharaoh disbelieved the message of Moses and Aaron, and suffered the plagues of the Lord as a consequence. The prophets of God preached to the people of Israel, that they should turn to Him; but their warnings were neglected, and the punishment followed in due course. And so it was when Saint John the Baptist proclaimed repentance to their descendants upon Jordan's bank. Even our Blessed Lord's Own most marvellous miracles failed to work many conversions, because of the hardness of the people's hearts. He could do no mighty work there because of their unbelief. The penalty came when the ploughshare passed over the hill of Sion, upon which the Temple of Solomon once had stood.

Even so, more or less, has it been in every

age of the Church. Preachers, clothed with the authority of their Master, have spoken, but spoken in vain. The crowds have heard the message of reconciliation, but have remained untouched, and in the broad path still. They have too often agreed with their own hearts to put off repentance to a period which never arrived, and so the Word has returned void. But shall it be so with us? Now God's present message is burdened with the odours of love. Creation, Redemption, a patient waiting for our repentance, the promise of pardon and acceptance, the great and final reward, are each and all singular manifestations of His amazing and abiding charity. He has loved us with an everlasting love. And above all, and especially, the time He grants us for making our peace secure, is a remarkable instance of the selfsame attribute. So that, if we are not drawn to repentance,—at once, now in the accepted time,—by His gracious goodness, surely the terrors of His threatenings might change our sinful hearts. For what says the Almighty? “The wicked shall be turned into hell and all the people that forget God.” And what is recorded elsewhere? “Those that have done good shall

go into life everlasting, and those that have done evil into everlasting fire.”—“ Behold, I come quickly, and My reward is with Me to give every man according as his work shall be.”

O blessed and everlasting reward if we attain to the peace and repose of Heaven ! O miserable existence if we fail to avoid the bitter pains of eternal death ! “ Now, now, is the accepted time ; now is the day of salvation.”

For the Judgment shall be universal. None shall escape. “ I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God ;” and every hidden sin shall be made manifest. The artifice, for their concealment, which has been successful so long shall be successful no longer : for the motive shall be laid bare and the punishment awarded. The lie that seemed so truthful, the deed of darkness committed long ago, the fraud, the adultery and the theft—of which the world knew nothing—shall all be brought to light. Nought shall remain in the back-ground : nothing escape the Eye of Him Who sitteth upon the Judgment-seat. Then, when time is past, when the sun has been turned into darkness and the moon into blood, when

the graves have opened, and the sea has given up her dead: when those on the left hand have called upon the mountains to fall upon them and the hills to cover them; then the final separation shall take place, and the sentences be pronounced. For the righteous, the gracious words, "Come, ye blessed children of My Father,"—an unceasing happiness, an eternal repose, an everlasting union with God. They shall rest for ever beyond Jordan's waters, and their eyes shall see the King in His Beauty. They shall tread the streets of the Heavenly Jerusalem, and share the Vision of Peace. God shall be theirs, and they shall be His, and Christ, the God-Man, shall reign Lord of all.

But for the wicked, there shall be a sentence of unutterable woe, proclaiming their fearful doom. They had time granted in which to make their choice for eternity, and opportunities of repentance, and for making their peace with God. But they are gone for ever. Now, for such, the Blood of Christ avails not, and only the sentence and its fulfilment remain. Theirs is an eternal curse, an utter darkness, an alienation from God. It extends both to soul and body, to understanding, to memory

and to will. It is the worm that never dies, the fire that never shall be quenched. It is an eternal separation from God, the source of every good. And finally, it is summed up in those awful words, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire."

Surely, surely therefore, dearly beloved in the faith, if this be the end of sinners, and sin still owns such a blighting and universal influence, it behoves us all to prepare for the Judgment at once. There should be no procrastination of intention, no postponement of action. We should begin now while it is day, for the night cometh when no man can work. During this present Advent season, from the very bottom of our hearts we should commence a repentance of our past transgressions, and should make an earnest resolution, by the grace of God, to walk for the future in newness of life. A year's delay may bring us an eternity of woe, while immediate contrition may finally lead us to the portal of light and life. "Now, therefore, is the accepted time." Christ calls, "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest." The Eternal Father thus reveals His Love, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; and

though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." The Blessed Spirit is waiting to pardon, strengthen and sanctify. The Saints are watching your progress. The Angels wait with anxiety, for there is joy amongst the Angels over one sinner that repenteth. O, then, while time and health and strength remain, prepare for that terrible day, when Eternity shall dawn:—terrible to sinners, who are found to be sinners then; joyous and thrice welcome to those who have made their peace with God. May He, of His infinite loving-kindness, bestow this grace upon us, for the sake of Him, Who as at this time was about to be born at Bethlehem, that so at His Second Advent we may obtain the promised reward, even the glories of Heaven, and the Presence of Himself!

The Third Sunday in Advent.

THE MODE OF REPENTANCE.

“Come, My people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee.”—ISAIAH xxvi. 20.

DURING the present Advent season we have learnt two most important lessons,—the first being, that “one thing needful,” the necessity of repentance; and the second, the high value attached by the Apostle St. Paul to an immediate and earnest consideration of the necessary change. God grant that we may have so learnt them, and laid them to heart, that the foundations of a practical and palpable repentance may have been made secure to each of us!

Now, in order to further this object, it does not seem out of place to bring especially before the faithful that very momentous subject which is selected for our consideration to-day, viz.:—the Mode of Repentance. Useless will it eventually prove to have spoken in a vague and general way in regard to so important a point. The way is certain, narrow and straight. People are

either making a journey along it, or they are traversing the broad path that leadeth to destruction. There are, as we have learnt again and again, but two roads, as there are but two ends: though there may be many degrees of sin and of sanctity. Therefore, as the message of reconciliation should be proclaimed at all times fearlessly and with distinctness, so should the manner of repentance be set before us all; that we may learn how much is to be accomplished, and in what way the work is to be done. Let us, then, consider this question systematically and with care; shadowed forth, as it seems to be, by the words of the text taken from the prophecy of Isaiah.

I. The first point to be attained is, a sincere and hearty sorrow for past sins: together with a thorough detestation of them, and an earnest purpose of sinning no more. To this must be added a full and unbounded confidence in the pardoning mercy and loving-kindness of Almighty God. Now, a hearty sorrow for sin is by no means easy of attainment, yet without this our repentance will have no sound foundation. So, then, let us seek it continually, and in God's

good time it will be permitted us not to seek in vain. Seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you. Moreover, we have an example before us in David, the man after God's own heart. After his sin with Bathsheba,—adultery, which led to murder,—he cried out “I am weary of my groaning, every night wash I my bed and water my couch with my tears.” The voice of his weeping was heard by Him Whose laws he had transgressed, and though there were temporal punishments in store for him, such, for example, as the death of his child; yet God eventually forgave him his sins. Now, to return to the general question. The reason why a sinner should experience the greatest and most sincere sorrow for sin, will be manifest from the following considerations:—(1) Perfect sorrow is a work of love, proceeding from what is technically called filial fear; so that the amount of sorrow and love should be the same. But the love with which we are bound to love God should be the most perfect love; therefore that sorrow, which is the first step in true repentance, should be of the most poignant and perfect kind. (2) Again: as God is unquestionably to be loved above all things,

whatsoever deeds or thoughts draw us away from Him are to be hated with the severest hatred. If we are to love God with all our powers of heart and soul, it follows as a matter of course,—and the conclusion is inevitable,—that having detested that which draws away our affections from Him, we should become contrite with all our hearts. (3) Furthermore, if as St. Bernard remarks, in his work *On Loving God*, “the measure of loving God is to love Him without measure,” surely, on the other hand, the hatred of sin is to be circumscribed within no possible limits. Therefore let our sorrow be vehement, deep and perfect. Let apathy and indifference be altogether excluded. “Ye shall seek Me,” promises Almighty God, by the mouth of His prophet Jeremiah, “and ye shall find Me, when ye shall search for Me with all your heart. And I will be found of you, saith the Lord, and I will turn away your captivity, and I will gather you from all the nations, and from all the places whither I have driven you, saith the Lord, and I will bring you again unto the place whence I caused you to be carried captive.” (4) Moreover, let our grief be apparent, manifest in deed, as well as in

thought. Our tears flow abundantly when we lose the friends we love; why not when we sorrow for our past transgressions? David exclaimed, "Lord, let my crying come unto Thee." "For I have eaten ashes as it were bread, and mingled my drink with weeping." The woman who was a sinner shed tears in the Presence of the All-Holy, and Peter, the zealous Apostle, after thrice denying his Master, went out and wept bitterly. (5) Again, all our sins must be remembered, reckoned up, and detested. "Come, My people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee." The long years that are past, with all their manifold transgressions, must be recalled one by one, and step by step. Those buried years shall bear a faithful witness. The sea shall give up her dead. The various sins of our different stations in life; our many changes of residence or state; at home, abroad; alone or with the multitude; in deliberation, or by frailty; each and all must be sought after, faced, and sorrowed for. In the silence of the chamber they shall come back again; as evil in their intention and character, as clear in their outline, as at the moment of transgression.

(6) And when this has been accomplished, there must be added a firm purpose of amendment of life. Almighty God Himself urges this :—" Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed, and make you a new heart and a new spirit : for why will ye die, O house of Israel ? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God, wherefore turn yourselves and live ye." The words of our Blessed Saviour, likewise, to the woman taken in adultery, are to the same purpose, " Go, and sin no more." For had we injured a friend, either by word or deed, before we could reasonably look for a reconciliation, we should be ready and willing not only to express our regret at having offended him, but also to offer every assurance for the future, that all cause of offence should be carefully avoided. And so it must be with our Father and Friend in Heaven, Almighty God. (7) Moreover, the cause of the injury must, as far as possible, be promptly and readily removed. Time, in some measure, may render this difficult of accomplishment ; but we should do the best in our power,—if we have sinned against our neighbour—both by

kindly word and tangible compensation, to make this step certain. (8) To this must be added a perfect willingness to forgive others, at whose hands we may have sustained any wrongs or injuries: because this is required of us by our Blessed Lord Himself. "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

These first steps, in retracing our path, must be immediately followed up by others, so as to prove that our sorrow is deep and true. A good and blameless life must be our aim. In fact, our lives and actions must be directed in exact accordance with the perfect law of God. We must see, in the poor who need to be fed and cherished, our brethren in Christ Jesus, Who voluntarily became poor for us, that we might enjoy the exceeding riches of His kingdom. We must strive to point out by our mode of living, that we have forsaken the broad road, and returned to the narrow way. We must "let our light shine before men, that they may see our good works, and glorify our Father which is in heaven."

And, especially, should we remember carefully to examine our consciences, according to the suggestion of the text, "Come, My people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee." We should make it a rule—which should never be broken—to turn our eyes inward, day by day, and call to mind our past transgressions with sorrow. Our sins in relation to God, to our neighbours as well as to ourselves, should all be summoned back again. Our aim will not be served, by a mere general admission that we are very great sinners; but each transgression, as far as possible, must be especially remembered and sorrowed for. In such a self-examination, we might go over the Ten Commandments, and discover in what way and to what extent we have transgressed each; or we might consider the deadly sins, numbered up by the Apostle, viz. :—Pride, Covetousness, Lust, Anger, Gluttony, Envy and Sloth, and learn how far and how often we have indulged in them. And we should ask God in prayer, to assist us in so doing. Thanking Him for past mercies, and especially for His forbearance and long-suffering, we should implore Him to accept

our return. We should exclaim, Enlighten us, O God, for thou knowest all our ways, and observest all our footsteps. Come, Holy Ghost, Thou True Light, and dispel the darkness round our souls, that we may know and perceive what in us is displeasing unto Thee, and with a contrite heart and humble spirit, may sorrow for past transgressions, and resolve, with Thy abounding grace, to forsake our sins, and amend our lives for the future.

II. So much, therefore, for this first point, the necessity of a true and hearty sorrow for sin. Now let us proceed to a consideration of the next step, viz. :—An earnest confession of our various transgressions.

And here, too, the example of David, again and again, forces itself upon our consideration. He exclaims, in the 32nd Psalm, “ I will acknowledge my sin unto Thee, and mine unrighteousness have I not hid. I said, I will confess my sins unto the Lord, and so Thou forgavest the wickedness of my sin.” And, again, in the 38th Psalm, “ There is no health in my flesh, because of Thy displeasure : neither is there

any rest in my bones, by reason of my sin. For my wickednesses are gone over my head, and are like a sore burden, too heavy for me to bear. . . . My heaviness is ever in my sight. For I will confess my wickedness, and be sorry for my sin." Now these very Psalms are selected specially by the Church of God to incite the faithful to follow King David's example, and are used in her offices with that particular object. Moreover, in almost every public service, a Form of Confession is appointed for the use of the congregation collectively. That in the Order for Morning and Evening Prayer is known to us all; and that in the Form for the Administration of the Holy Communion, beginning, "Almighty God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," is no doubt familiar to a majority. There is likewise a particular form prepared for special occasions, in the Office for the Visitation of the Sick; so that those who are weary and heavy-laden may, according to Christ's commandment, relieve themselves of their burdensome sin-load. And these plans and opportunities, so advantageous to our spiritual life, are, as it were, a gathering together and embodiment of the directions

of Holy Scripture. The wise man thus writes:—"He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy:" and St. John the Evangelist thus:—"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us; but if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." And the early Christian writers and Fathers of the Church hold similar language. St. Ambrose, in his Treatise concerning Paradise, asserts, that without confession no man can be justified. The same teaching is confirmed by St. Jerome, when commenting upon the Book of Ecclesiastes. St. Cyprian, also, who is treating of the lapsed,—*i. e.* of persons who, having renounced Paganism, became Christians, and then returned to their former state,—writes to this effect, "Although actually free from the guilt of sacrificing to idols, still as they entertained the intention of doing so, they should disclose their conscience, and confess their sins, seeking a necessary and wholesome medicine for the wounds of their soul." Thus, therefore, if we would truly and heartily

repent, it behoves us to declare our sins before God, and accuse ourselves with sincerity and singleness of heart of all our manifold transgressions. We must conceal nothing, or keep nothing back ; for God, who can read our hearts at a glance, knows well their disposition and state. Every kind and species of sin, then, must be acknowledged to Him, with deep regret, and earnest contrition. Moreover, our confession must be sincere. We must not excuse ourselves, or attempt to hide or palliate our evil deeds ; but must readily acknowledge them, and seek forgiveness in the Most Holy Name of our Blessed Lord and Saviour. All must be admitted. Each must be confessed. Come, My people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee.

Perhaps the four following considerations may lead some amongst us to take this step with promptness and earnestness.

1. The first is, the fact that we have deserved everlasting punishment : for consider what would have been our lot had Almighty God visited us with death when we were living in a state of habitual deadly sin. That deed of fornication, that long-

cherished thought of malice and envy, that deliberate act of pride, made us children of the devil. How many souls are now companying with the fallen angels, who sinned as we have sinned ! How frequently many amongst us have deserved to be cut off ! And yet God waits for us to confess our sins and promise amendment of life : and this, too, while some are making use of His very mercy to insult Him. O, how much do we owe God for having waited so patiently for our repentance up to this present Advent season ! Shall it pass away with no true contrition on our part, with no earnest sorrow for our sins, with no humble and hearty confession of them, before the footstool of His pardoning mercy ?

2. The second reason is, the fact that we have at the same time lost Paradise. For before we sinned, Paradise was our own true home. It was our inheritance, our promised land, our country, our resting-place, our delight. There, too, was a perfect and eternal repose. But no sooner had we succumbed to sin and the devil gained a victory, than our name was blotted out of the Book of Life. We sold our birthright for a mess of pottage—some miserable act of self-indul-

ence,—we turned our back upon our true country and our promised land, and renounced our title to the bliss of the blessed. We forfeited our right to the Garden of God. The Blessed Spirit was no longer our Comforter. Christ was no longer our Friend. God was no longer our Father. Yet—bright hope and blessed thought!—may we return to Him in sorrow and confession, and He will receive us once again. Come, My people, enter thou into thy chambers. “I have sinned against Heaven and before Thee, and am no more worthy to be called Thy son.” “Thy sins are forgiven thee. Go in peace.”

3. The third consideration is, the miserable thought that we are again and again renewing the sufferings of Christ Jesus, crucifying Him afresh by our sins, and putting Him to an open shame. We are treating with scorn and treading under foot the Precious Blood of Calvary. The spear-wound is deepened, the nails are more cruel, the wine mingled with myrrh more bitter, the crown of thorns harder to wear. And though our sins, by their malice and number, wound Him more rudely, yet He loves us and intercedes for us still. He invites us to

repentance. He urges us to sorrow. He promises acceptance. Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow. Come, My people, enter thou into thy chambers. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

4. And, fourthly, because by sinning we have deliberately offended Almighty God. We have made Him Who created us, redeemed us, chose us for His brethren, and fed us on His Own Most Blessed Body and Blood, our enemy. He loaded us with the richest benedictions. He conferred countless favours upon us. He has prepared for us many mansions in His Father's House. Why, then, have we so betrayed, insulted, and wronged so good and merciful a God? How often have we turned our backs upon Him! How frequently have we wronged Him, offended Him, rebelled against Him, and betrayed Him! To how many gracious calls have we closed our ears! How many solemn Advent lessons have we altogether neglected! And yet He has preserved our lives continually; protected us from danger, and called us home again to His rest and to His love! Would that we could blot out the black and miserable past, and renounce

altogether and for ever the world, the flesh and the devil,—would that an earnest repentance were ours, and that our pardon was sealed in the Blood of the Immaculate Lamb !

Surely, therefore, beloved in God, these four considerations are more than sufficient to induce us to begin the necessary work at once. Surely, when we meditate upon these motives which should lead us to confess our sins, that confession will be both humble and sincere ; open and perfect ; brave, tearful, and self-accusing ; and if this be so, our peace will be a peace from God, which increases and abounds more and more,—a peace which passeth all understanding.

III. Thirdly, and finally,—with regard to the general subject, the Mode of Repentance,—we must remember that unless we entertain a firm purpose of amendment, our labours will prove but vain and unproductive. This is essential to success. A firm resolution, by God's grace, must be made to serve Him better and more faithfully for the future ; or the attempt at repentance will be futile, and its fruits worthless. Moreover,

it must not be by words only, that we must make manifest our sincerity, but by deeds. We must bring forth fruits meet for repentance. If Prayer be necessary at all times, surely it is especially necessary then. For the soul needs fresh helps and more abundant blessings, and Prayer is the appointed channel by which those blessings descend. To this must be added earnest self-denial and alms-giving. "If any man," says our Blessed Lord, "will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me." And to the same effect ran the injunction of old: "Give alms of thy goods, and never turn thy face from any poor man, and then the Face of the Lord shall not be turned away from thee." God has abundantly blessed us, shall we not give of our goods in return to comfort and sustain those who are less abundantly blessed than ourselves? Let us not give merely some mean sum, some miserable coin, some annual donation; but let us continually deny ourselves; and especially so, during this coming season of festivity, in order that our repentance may be made manifest by deeds, and sealed by the very acts we perform for the greater glory of God. So shall fruit spring

forth and ripen, and the tree shall no longer cumber the ground. Once more: we must also imitate the example of the Holy kings and prophets of old, as well as that of our Blessed Lord Himself and His Apostles, by fasting. This is a duty recognized as strongly by Scripture as by the Church. David fasted, and voluntarily subjected himself day and night to punishment. He cried out in the agony of his soul, "Wash me thoroughly from my wickedness, and cleanse me from my sin: for I acknowledge my transgression, and my sin is ever before me;" thus beseeching God not only to pardon his crime, but also the punishment due to it, and to restore him to his former blessed state of purity and integrity. In like manner Hezekiah fasted. It was the same likewise with Jeremiah, Daniel and John the Baptist. Our Blessed Saviour, too, fasted for forty days and forty nights. And the Apostles also fasted before the selection and consecration of Matthias. We, therefore, should thus tread in their footsteps, and prove our sincerity by such works, as by God's grace we are enabled to perform.

Furthermore: we should pray earnestly for the grace of perseverance. No man having put his hand to the plough and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God. Therefore, must we continue constant in prayer. We must ever seek to deny ourselves. We must always be ready for the conflict with our own sinful natures. No man, who has remained in sin for years, until transgressions of the deepest dye have become a habit, can reasonably expect to become a saint, without much anxious toil and continual self-denial. Such a fight at starting will be sore and deadly. The armour and weapons may at first appear cumbersome and difficult to use. But they must be tried and proved by constant use, and then they will do their work. Fight resolutely, therefore. Be not disheartened. Be not dismayed. Go with a brave heart to the conflict, and aim at the utter destruction of your spiritual foes; exterminate them utterly; for if you leave one alive, he will become a thorn in your side. Then persevere, and in God's good time you shall obtain a victory. Your honor is in the Hands of the Great Captain of our Salvation. None

can lose the battle, save by their own will. Therefore, fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on Eternal Life.

Thus, beloved in Christ, shall the first step lead to the last. Thus shall strict self-examination, produce true sorrow, and true sorrow an earnest confession, and an earnest confession a firm purpose of amendment. So will the soil of our hearts become cleansed from the rank and abounding weeds of sin, which spring up and increase so abundantly. And the tears of repentance, and the dew of God's grace shall fall gently, again and again. Then the seeds from Heaven shall be scattered, to swell and shoot forth, and finally to put forth root and branch, leaf and blossom. They shall take root downward, and bear fruit upward. And ye shall be blessed in your closer walk with your God, and finally gain an everlasting reward.

Then delay no longer. Excuse yourselves no more. Here is an offer of Reconciliation through the Blood of Christ. Here is the Gospel Message. God willeth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should be converted and live. If any man sin we have an Advocate with the

Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous, and He is the propitiation for our sins. Are you wandering, are you aliens, are you deliberately sitting in darkness and the shadow of death? If so, ponder on your present state. Pause and meditate for a moment. Come My people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee. Begin your repentance at once. Christ will speedily come to judge both the quick and the dead. Prepare to meet thy God. And may He, of His infinite mercy, grant to each and all of us, for the sake of the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ, His Son, that we may so make our peace with Him here, that we may be permitted to share His glory hereafter! Amen.

The Fourth Sunday in Advent.

THE REWARD OF REPENTANCE.

“ The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”—
PHILIPPIANS iv. 7.

By the use of these words in the Epistle for the day, the Church seems to point out to us the nature of that promised reward, which those who duly prepare for the Second Advent of our Lord and Saviour, shall receive in His good time. The lessons of the first Advent Sundays urged us to repentance,—bidding us fight the good fight of faith with success,—and now we have an assurance of peace. So that our minds are naturally and irresistibly led on from the present to the future, from earth to heaven, from man to God. They are drawn off from the cares and concerns—the trials and joys, the shadows and sunshine—of this life, to a consideration of the life eternal, to a contemplation of the abiding bliss of a happy eternity. If the calls of Advent are heartily and promptly

answered, if the pleadings of the Spirit of God are properly responded to, such a change will have been effected, as will finally ensure for us that "peace which passeth all understanding," thus described in the text. It will be the full fruition of that peace which our Blessed Lord God, as at this time, came upon earth to bring. It will be a peace, which, in our present state, we can neither realize nor comprehend. Our hearts and minds will be full to overflowing with it. Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee. Moreover, it will be given us for the sake of Jesus Christ. And, finally, it will be the peace of God.

May He grant that having learnt, through His grace, the character of this promised and enduring reward, we may so crucify our own wills and affections, and aim at doing the will of God, that His Peace may be ours, at the Second Advent of His Only Begotten Son !

To this end, let us consider the text before us, from its two salient points of view. First, with regard to peace on earth ; and secondly, in reference to the final and perfect peace to be attained in heaven.

I. Peace on earth. Our Blessed Saviour's Birth was the dawn of that era which shall witness ere it closes the peaceful and blessed influence of the grace of God. And so, on the morning of His Nativity, the Angelic choir sang, "Glory to God in the highest, Peace on earth, and good will towards men." The dawn had been prophesied of in years long passed away. The righteous of old had treasured up the memory of God's gracious and life-giving promise, that the Seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. It had never been altogether forgotten. Kings and prophets had desired to see the day of Christ, but had gone to their rest and had not seen it; and the whole world expected the Advent of some Great and Mighty Deliverer. Isaiah, the Evangelical prophet, thus wrote:—"The people shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." Even the pagan oracles testified to this truth, and the heathen poet sang of an iron race passing away, and giving place to a race of gold, and told of a time of extraordinary and enduring repose. The world's

Redeemer came, but not as was expected. His place was not found amongst kings and princes, but with His Mother,—the Lily of Israel,—the lowly Maiden of Judæa. He was not clothed in purple, but in swaddling clothes. And the heavenly carol of the first Christmas night was only listened to by some poor shepherds on the Bethlehem plains. His First Advent was the inauguration of a brighter day, and the beginning of the reign of Peace. To those who have found peace, who have sold all to purchase the Pearl of Great Price, His Second Advent will be the inauguration of the eternal peace of God, and the reward of all who seek to do His will.

And especially so, even here, during their progress through the wilderness of this world, shall those who have earnestly repented, gain a repose which the world can neither give nor take away. At best, the peace of earth is but hollow and delusive; while the peace of God is fraught with blessings enduring and eternal. “My Peace I leave with you, My Peace I give unto you, not as the world giveth give I unto you,” was the promise of Our Blessed Lord Himself. That gift can still be ob-

tained with all its abounding riches. Are you seeking it earnestly? Seek until ye find. Are you weary of the miserable excitement of sin, of the uncertainty of your future, of the danger of meeting everlasting perdition? If so, repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. For this is God's especial message to you. He bids us prepare the way of the Lord and make His paths straight. He urges us to call the wanderer home, and point first to the Rock of Calvary, and then to the City of Peace. How many Advent seasons have come and gone, and found thousands of nominal Christians at enmity with, and alienated from, their God and Lord,—without repentance, without pardon, without acceptance, without peace!

Let us take an instance, in order to bring home to ourselves the accuracy of this most melancholy fact. For years a man has been indulging in some deliberate deadly sin. He sinned once, in youth or early manhood; for the devil baited a trap with artfulness, and spread a snare to ensure that success which was attained. Months passed, and the bitter memory of that sin returned and returned again. There

was a certain sorrow, a modified shame; but both were but transient and superficial; and so, in due time, the sin was once more committed. Another short span came and went, during which the sin was again indulged in, and often reiterated. At last it verily became a recognized moral disease. Like some deadly cancer, untouched and unheeded, it grew and increased in virulence and in danger. Darkness and blackness brooded over the soul, for the Blessed Spirit of God had long ago departed. Advent and Christmas, Lent and Easter, with their warnings and hopes, wrought no change. And yet the world knew not that any change was needed. There was a placid countenance, a so-called philanthropic spirit, a geniality of disposition, a peace which the world could bestow. He, at whose vitals the worm of sin was gnawing, sat in his family-pew each Sunday morning with regularity and seeming devotion. Twice a year, because it was a family custom, he approached the Lord's Table, and made sacrilegious communions. He held the plate at church-doors, sat on the platform of religious meetings, boasted of an Englishman's privilege in belonging

to a pure and Apostolic branch of the Church, and looked with contempt upon the religion of foreigners. Other years came and went ; the sin was now a habit, or scarcely looked upon as a sin at all ; the hair turned grey ; life's downward path was taken ; the end was near. At last, like a sudden thunder-clap, the Angel of Death called, and another soul stood sin-stained and naked in the Presence of its Judge. It was but a short journey from earth to heaven, from the chamber of death to the bar of God ; but the way was unknown, and the final halting-place revealed the unrealized future. " Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of God." " Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire."

Now such an one, in all probability, was, in a certain way, at peace with himself. The world and the devil—those twin foes that go ever hand in hand,—lulled him into a false security. He thought only of the present,—shutting out from consideration either a memory of the past, or a hope for the future. While he was forgetting God, the sunshine streamed down bountifully round his path, and the dews fell ; and he was obtaining in abundance all that this

world could bestow. He was successful in speculation ; his money doubled itself ; his ships came back to port laden with treasure ; his acres were more than ever profitable ; and so, considering only the present life, he was self-satisfied, secure, and at peace. He desired not the peace of God, but only the peace of this world ; for he was an alien to the love of God,—caring not to be otherwise,—and so his desire was gratified.

And of how many is this but an under-drawn picture ! We consider not now the openly sinful,—those whom the world, on its own judgment, is compelled to write down as such,—but the ordinary, every-day respectable, well-to-do citizen. We only now bring under notice the man of the world, the modern Pharisee,—thanking God that he is not as other men are,—or the person of a Sadducean habit of mind, who is condescending enough to patronize Christianity, while he pooh-poohs its doctrines and precepts. Such people are called again and again by Almighty God. Every summer knows a stormy period. The brightest days are oftentimes clouded for a while. Sorrows and disappointments break in upon the peace of the world. The Gospel Message

is sometimes heard, and the future sometimes thought of. At all events this must be so at last. If death be not absolutely sudden, the very nearness of eternity, in the ordinary course of nature, cannot fail of revealing the mysteries and realities of the world unseen. There must be a time, if this be so, when the peace of this world passes for ever away; when the veil is drawn momentarily aside; when forgotten lessons of religion learnt in youth,—mere skeletons of old, mysterious and unintelligible,—become clothed with the life of truth; when all that once seemed so fair and bright, so unrugged and straight, shall be black and overclouded with the mists of eternal death. For whither do unrepented transgressions lead? Here is the answer. The wages of sin is death. There is no peace, saith my God, for the wicked. The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the people that forget God.

If this, then, be the goal to which those shall arrive, who content themselves with the miserable, changeful and unsatisfying peace of this world; what should be the aim of all who desire to possess, both here and hereafter, the abiding and enduring peace

of Almighty God ? Nothing less, dearly beloved, than that hearty repentance urged upon us on previous Sundays. O may God of His infinite mercy grant that, during this solemn season, many may have been led to a closer walk with Him ; many, with tears and prayers, may have sought for that pardon and forgiveness which is the earnest of peace upon earth, and which finally gains the everlasting peace of God, which passeth all understanding !

And if, like the dove returning to the ark, ye have once again found rest for the sole of your feet, seek ye peace and ensue it. You may have it in degree now, if ye labour early and late to obtain it ; you shall have it in divine plenitude hereafter. A house cannot be built at once ; nor can the spiritual building be erected, save by degrees. And the perfection of this work depends essentially upon two things ; the first of which is, that the Hand of God prepares a dwelling-place in your hearts ; and the second, that a profound humility be placed as the foundation stone of the structure. The path which leads to this peace is almost unknown to the world. Comparatively speaking, it is well-nigh deserted.

Those who traverse it have a single eye to the glory of God. Tribulation is sought after there; and derision and contempt are clutched at, as ambitious men of the world seek after honors and wealth. They, who in humbleness of heart, are pursuing their heavenward course, neglect and are neglected, forsake and are forsaken by all men. Their holy ambition is to be known and comforted by God alone. In that path they learn that afflictions, duly and patiently borne, become treasures laid up in the casket of God, to be possessed and enjoyed throughout all eternity. Though such suffer by temptation, and fall; yet should this serve only to increase their humility, and enable them to watch over themselves more strictly for the future. Neither inward temptations should disturb nor outward foes molest. Both should be withdrawn from at once, with a prayer for additional strength from God. And finally, to gain this strength and increase this earthly repose, there should be a continual aim to keep the soul in purity and peace in the sight of our Heavenly Father. He alone should be considered. Upon Him and His glorious seat in Heaven,—the Great White Throne,—

should the gaze of Faith be ever and steadfastly fixed. So would experience teach that His Most Blessed Will appoints everything for our greater and everlasting good, and so, whether it were dark or light, joy or sorrow ; whether the Presence of God were near, or—to try our faith, withdrawn for a season,—we should be able to say with our Blessed Lord, and in His Words, Thy Will be done. So by such a disposition would our earthly peace be more and more increased. God would clothe us with Himself, when He should find us utterly stripped of every consideration for ourselves. His divine goodness would work abundantly in us and with us. He would be mindful of us, when we had utterly forgotten all but Himself, and lead us ever along the way of salvation. Thy peace shall be as a river, and Thy righteousness as the waves of the sea. On the rugged path and over the stormy ocean, in the desert and at Jordan, Thy way shall be secure and straight ; and everlasting peace shall be upon Israel.

II. And if our Peace on Earth should prove to be so rich a benediction, shall not the eternal peace of the Christian, the perfect

Peace of Heaven be that which passeth all understanding?

Let us consider the text, therefore, from its second point of view. God has revealed to us by the mouth of His Apostle St. Paul, that eye hath not seen nor ear heard; nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things which God has prepared for them that love Him. In truth the blessedness of that Home of repose and bliss, where the Angels of God company, is beyond the range of our thoughts and conceptions, for it is the Home and dwelling-place of the Most High Himself. And as, in all His attributes—majesty, might, wisdom, power and dominion—He is infinite, so likewise is He in His blessings and rewards. His loving-kindness is great, His mercy endureth from everlasting to everlasting. What, then, must be that blessed Kingdom of Heaven, which He has prepared for those who serve Him? Planned by infinite Wisdom, and called into existence by infinite Power, it will manifest forth His glory and magnificence for ever and ever.

Again: if by the cost of any ordinary treasure we possess, we may judge of its value; how should Heaven be valued, and

sought after by every living soul ! For it cost our Blessed Saviour Jesus Christ a temporal renunciation of His Father's Glory, which He had with Him before the worlds began. It cost Him the Agony in Gethsemane, and the Sorrows and Passion of Calvary. Yea, it cost Him His Own Most Precious Blood : by the which He purchased it back again for weak and sinful man. And if this be so, can we hope to obtain Heaven, with all its abiding joys, a fellowship with the unfallen Angels, a company with the Saints, its perfect repose, its eternal peace, without giving up ourselves, our wills, our souls and our bodies to Him who seeks us ? Surely not. Therefore, should we count no labours too irksome, no sufferings too painful, no cross too hard to bear, if after all we can gaze upon and share the eternal Vision of Peace. Though we underwent ten thousand deaths—and from death man naturally shrinks,—yet are we distinctly assured, that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glories that shall be revealed. So indisputably do joys of Heaven supersede our highest conceptions ! Once more, the peace of God which passeth all understanding, or, in other

words, the future state of eternal happiness, is a state made perfect by the gathering together of everything that is good. Every capacity of the soul shall be filled—every desire satisfied. Nought but good shall be there, and God, the Author of all good, shall be all in all.

The very Home and Temple of God, too, in the midst of the Heavenly City, is radiant with splendour and loveliness. “How amiable are Thy dwellings, Thou Lord of Hosts! My soul hath a desire and longing to enter into the Courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh rejoice in the living God.” And the splendour and loveliness of these mansions in every degree correspond with His riches and magnificence. He called the Heavens into being, for the manifestation of His power and goodness, to become the eternal dwelling-place of His favored children. If earth retains so many abiding testimonies of its former beauty and peace,—if the sun rises and sets in power and magnificence, and the moon walks up the sky in such chaste beauty; if the earth is clothed with bright flowers, and her mines are rich with choice jewels,—surely Heaven shall be fairer than all. Earth, at best,

is but a wreck of its former self. Now the thorn and the thistle spring up, and we have the storm, the volcano and the earthquake. Still the earth is beautiful. So that if God is so bountiful to His enemies—to those who desire to live at enmity with Him,—what may not His friends—His adopted children, prepared on earth by a life of humility, faith and peace,—expect in those mansions of Heaven, where Christ ever liveth to make intercession for us?

But all this is described by St. John the Evangelist, in the last Book of Holy Scripture, where his language accommodates itself to our finite and circumscribed intelligence. Using such comparisons as may convey his meaning and become evident, he pictures in detail the splendour and glory of the Heavenly Jerusalem. Its walls are built of precious stones. There gleam the sardius, the beryl and the chrysolyte. The twelve gates are twelve pearls. The street of the City is pure gold. There, too, is the Throne of God and of the Lamb, from which proceeds a pure river of water—the water of life,—clear as crystal. There, likewise, are the faithful servants of the Lamb, clad in white robes, with His Name written upon their

foreheads. There hang the seven lamps before the Throne, and the seven golden candlesticks gleam, amongst which He walks, Who liveth and was dead, but is now alive for evermore, and hath the keys of death and hell. The tree of life is also there, with its twelve manner of fruits; and there is no night, for the Lamb is the Light thereof.

And those who people these mansions shall be, first, the unnumbered crowds of Angels who stand always before God's Throne, and patiently wait His behest. Thousand thousands minister unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stand before Him. Each order of Angel in his appointed rank; and the Saints of the Most High. They who after patient waiting have sought and found Him whom their souls loved; of every country and every age; the old and the young; the rich and the poor; each stamped with the signet of salvation, and sealed by the Spirit of God. There for ever are they safe from the incursion of the foe, or the temptation of the wicked. The wise and the holy, the humble and the pure in heart shall be

linked together with the golden chain of God's all-perfect and abiding love. Friend shall meet friend, and brother brother, knit together by the cords of charity. The praises of God shall be their work, the Love of God their theme. They shall, as it were, have but one heart, one soul and one will. Those ten thousand times ten thousand hearts,—joined by love to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus,—shall beat with but one pulsation. The joy of one shall become the joy of all, and there shall be no sorrows there; for God shall have wiped away all tears from their eyes.

Furthermore and finally: the Heavenly Jerusalem is interpreted the Vision of Peace. And this name is bestowed, because here alone is the true seat of eternal repose. Here there is neither heat nor cold, storm nor disease; here the pains of earth are fled, and its conflicts over; here the adversary never comes, and all is rest and repose. The day is always bright, the calm is ever serene, the peace is an everlasting peace. "A permanent rest," writes Thomas à Kempis, "a peace never to be disturbed, but always the same; a

peace both within and without, a peace in every way secure ;” in fine, the peace of God, which passeth all understanding.

O, then, beloved in Christ, seek ye this peace at once. Begin this very day, before the night comes on. Labour with all your hearts, and you shall labour with certain success. Realize the loss you sustain, if you lose your own soul, and then turn to God. Think of the love of His Son, of the gifts of His Spirit. You know that God is merciful, for your very lives tell you this. You feel that He is long-suffering: or this Advent would never have been known by you. Do not delay, then; do not put aside your responsibility. Act at once. Soon another Advent will be past and gone. A few more days and Christmas is upon us. Then He comes, Who is the Prince of Peace. Then the annual period of special preparation for His Second Coming will again have fled. The end of the year is near us: perhaps, likewise, the end of time and of all things. O beloved, in His Name, whose birth we so soon commemorate, I earnestly bid ye turn and live. He came to bring life and immortality to light, and will ye choose death. He descended to earth, that ye

might, through His grace, ascend to Heaven. Linger, therefore, no longer in the plain, but escape ye to the mountains and be safe. Fear not the bitterness of repentance, fear not the narrow road,—only mistrust yourselves and look to God,—fear not the tempter's power. Believe that He who has promised will perform, and your race at last shall bring you a certain reward. Peace here, peace hereafter. Mercy and truth shall meet together, righteousness and peace shall kiss each other. The Prince of Peace shall be your Friend. The God of Peace your Father, and City of Peace your home. Which may He grant for the sake of His Only-begotten Son, Christ our Lord ! Amen.

Christmas Day.

THE WORD MADE FLESH.

“The Word was made Flesh, and dwelt among us.”—
ST. JOHN, i. 14.

THE Mystery of the Incarnation is the central verity of Christianity, and is thus defined for our instruction,—as an amplification of the text,—in the Athanasian Creed :—
“For the right faith is that we believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and Man : God of the substance of the Father, begotten before the world, and Man of the substance of His Mother, born in the world : Perfect God and Perfect Man of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting : Equal to the Father as touching His Godhead, and inferior to the Father as touching His Manhood. Who although He be God and Man : yet He is not two but One Christ : One not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh, but by taking of the Manhood into God. One altogether, not by confusion of substance,

but by Unity of Person. For as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man, so God and Man is one Christ." These distinct and explicit sentences,—so clear in their statements and explanations,—bear especially upon the subject for our consideration to-day, viz., the Birth of our Blessed Lord in time of Mary His Mother.

Now, this doctrine of the Incarnation has been more briefly defined as "the union of the nature of man with that of God in the One Person of the Word." And here, at the threshold of our subject, let us pause to bow with the most profound awe before this wonderful revelation of Almighty God. That He should have condescended to have ordained this means of restoring the human race is very merciful; and that it is so, should be sufficient for us. Speculation should not be indulged in; for the more frequently we meditate upon it, the more clearly shall we perceive its admirable fitness; and realize, at the same time, something of the adorable and infinite charity of Him who loved us even to the end. God grant to each of us the spirit of faith, humility and a sound mind, that we may humbly believe and believing adore!

I. And, first, let us remember to hold firmly to the revealed truth, that the Second Person in the Ever Blessed Trinity is the Only-begotten Son of God. "He is called Son," remarks St. Cyril of Jerusalem, "not because He was produced in the way of adoption, but because He was naturally begotten." And St. Gregory Nazianzen: "He is called Son, because He is of one substance or essence with the Father, and more than that, because He is from Him." Furthermore, He was begotten of the Father before all worlds. This profound mystery transcends the comprehension even of the Angels of God. "How He was begotten," writes the same author, "is neither known to the Angels nor to thee. Beyond the fact, all is hidden by a cloud, and our vision pierceth it not." Moreover, our Blessed Lord is "God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God." Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him and he in God. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God," as we read in the Gospel for to-day, "and the Word was God." And again: "All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was

made." Here then, in these simple yet wonderful words of St. John, we have predicated of the Word ; *Eternity*, " He was in the beginning ;" *Distinction of Persons*, " He was with God ;" *Divinity*, " He was God ;" and *Creation*, " All things were made by Him." And it was the same Second Person in the Blessed Trinity who took our nature upon Him. He was made man. He was born of Mary at Bethlehem. " The Word was made Flesh."

And this took place, as the Nicene Creed states, " for us men and for our salvation." Even thus. In the beginning God had created man in His Own Image, for His Own honor and glory. After a period of probation upon earth, he was to reign with his Maker for ever in Heaven. But the sin of Adam in particular, as well as the general and manifold transgressions of future times, frustrated the Will of the Most High. There followed that punishment which was justly due. Man, who had been made but a little lower than the Angels—endowed with the threefold gifts of memory, will and understanding—became the doomed victim of death. " Thou shalt not surely die," would too soon turn out a mere delusion and a

falsehood. Even the physical creation—erewhile pronounced by God to have been very good—experienced the influence of man's transgressions; for thorns and thistles sprang up and increased. Still, though the wrath of God fell, His compassionate charity, which was unbounded, descended likewise. For the very first sin of disobedience called forth the wondrous scheme of expiation and redemption; and, though Adam sinned and Eve fell, the promised Seed of the woman, Jesus, the Son of Mary, was pledged to our contrite first parents. The darkness that hung around them, when they turned their backs upon the Paradise of God, was broken by the promise of the Light of Light; and as years passed and sin deepened in intensity, the consolation of this promise only stood out more distinctly as a brilliant beacon amid the gloom, to assure the just and comfort the heavy-laden. Solemn prophecy and obscure tradition told of the King who should reign in righteousness and the princes who should rule in judgment—of the Man Who should be as an hiding-place from the wind, a covert from the tempest, as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.

And this promise of God was fulfilled four thousand years afterwards at Bethlehem of Judæa. The nations had waited with anxiety. Kings and prophets had desired to see the day of Christ: but had not seen it. But God had not forgotten His pledge, and at last the time came. To a few He had revealed the Advent of the Messiah. Nine months before, Gabriel the Archangel of God had brought a message to Mary, that by the power of the Highest and the operation of the Holy Ghost, she should bring forth a Son and call His Name Jesus; and she had consented, saying, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it unto me according to thy Word." Joseph, too, the espoused husband of the Blessed Virgin, had had it revealed to him "that That Which was conceived in her was of the Holy Ghost."

So they came to Bethlehem, the City of David,—of whose house and lineage they were,—to be taxed according to the decree of Augustus; and there, in the stable of an inn, the pure Virgin gave birth to her Immaculate Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes. And thus the Word was made Flesh.

It was night, and upon the hilly plains

of Bethlehem shepherds were watching their flocks : when lo ! the Angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them, and they were sore afraid. But the Angel said unto them, “ Fear not, for behold I bring you glad tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the City of David a Saviour Which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you. Ye shall find the Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.” And suddenly there was with the Angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, “ Glory to God in the highest : peace on earth and goodwill towards men.” Thus, then, was the Birth of our Blessed Lord made known unto mankind.

O amazing mystery ! O boundless inconceivable love of God ! That the Only-Begotten of the Father should not only humble Himself, but—as St. Paul writes,—should verily empty Himself and take upon Him the form of a servant. Should empty Himself ! He was eternal. He was unchangeable. He was uncreated. So, as He could neither lay aside His glory, His immutability or His eternity,—for like His bliss and His life they are Himself,—He took

to Himself man's nature that He might suffer and die. God was made man in weakness, in infirmity, in time, still continuing,—in might, in majesty and eternity,—God blessed for evermore !

This, therefore, being the doctrinal portion of our subject, its earnest consideration is commended at all times and seasons to the faithful, and especially so during this present festival of Christmas. For, year by year, the Church has summoned her children to a special contemplation of this deep and unfathomable mystery of the Incarnation ; and has led them by faith to the Manger of Bethlehem and the Presence of the Infant Christ. Week by week, too, does she further remind them of the same, by her Eucharistic Hymn, “ Glory be to God on High ; ” when the mystery of the Incarnation is perpetuated, and our Blessed Lord vouchsafes to become our spiritual food and sustenance in the Holy Sacrament. And particularly so at Christmas ; for the appointed Psalms, the Proper Lessons, the Collect, Epistle and Gospel, the Proper Preface, as well as the latter portion of the Athanasian Creed, all speak of this important Christian doctrine ; and remind us of *the blessings which we received through the*

Nativity of Christ. Of these blessings and their Author, the great Christian champion of early times, St. Athanasius, thus writes in his book *On the Incarnation of the Word*:—"It was becoming that our restitution to the rank and dignity of sons of God should be effected by Him, who is by nature the Son of God; and that the Image of God in which we had been created, and which sin had so defaced, should be restored in Him and through Him, Who is the express Image of His Person." And again: "None else could renew the Image of God Himself, and none else could make the mortal immortal, but He Who is the Life itself, even our Lord Jesus Christ. For as if a portrait becomes obliterated by filthy stains, it is necessary to have recourse to him whose picture it is, that the likeness may again be renewed on the same panel, so the All-Holy Son of the Father, being His likeness or Image, came down to us, that He might restore man made after His Own Image."

II. Now, therefore, let us proceed to a contemplation of those lessons and practical duties which, in consideration of our know-

ledge and privileges as members of Christ's mystical body, unquestionably devolve upon us at this particular season. And here we shall discover that doctrine and practice go hand in hand.

1. And first, with regard to the Birth of Jesus. He was made Man, the Word was made Flesh; and this Nativity caused an universal joy to all the world. For He was the Redeemer who had been desired and sighed after for so many long years. He was the Desire of the nations. And so glad tidings of great joy was the message of the Angels to the shepherds. That same message is year by year delivered to us. And it should bring us exceeding much joy. For if there be great rejoicing when a first-born son is born to an earthly King, how much more ought we to observe this blessed festival with gladness, when we commemorate the coming down from Heaven of Christ Jesus our Lord! And it was through the tender mercy of our God whereby the Day-Spring from on high hath visited us. For we were lost and ruined both by original and actual sin; when lo! He came to seek and to save that which was lost. He is the Good Shepherd Who descended to gather together His

scattered flock, and preserve them from the incursion of the foe. He is the Lamb of God, who willingly gave Himself a ransom for sinners. He is the True Bread from Heaven, the spiritual Manna from above. So writes St. Augustine, in his *Tractate upon St. John*:—"In the manger where is placed the food for animals, there He permitted His Sacred Limbs to be placed, evidencing thereby that His Own Body would become the eternal Food of mankind." And our Lord's Own Words are, "My Flesh is meat indeed, and My Blood is drink indeed."

O, then, let us ever remember these His merciful deeds and supernatural graces. Lord, we have gone astray; we have wandered from the heavenly path; we have followed our own desires and pleasures; we are lost in the wilderness of sin. But Thou art the Good Shepherd and the Lamb of God. If, therefore, we desire to amend our lives, what need we fear; for Thou hast called. Thou wert born in time that we might be born again for eternity. The Lord is our Shepherd, therefore can we lack nothing. He has given us Himself; so, then, let us strive, in return, to give ourselves to

Him. Lord, here are our hearts. Change them through Thy grace. Inflammé them with Thy Love. We desire to give ourselves entirely to Thee, and to love Thee with all our hearts and minds. Receive and accept us on this Thy Birthday, and permit us to love Thee for ever and ever.

2. Secondly, Christ Jesus was born an infant—"Unto us a Child is born." "Ye shall find the Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger." The first Adam came into the world at full age: the Second Adam chose to be born an infant. For our sakes He became a little child. For our sakes the Great and Supreme God made Himself little. If children,—who gain our affections, because, commonly speaking, we regard them as innocent,—are loved, surely we ought to love most tenderly the Holy Child Jesus. For in children, until baptized, dwells the infection of original sin: but the Babe of Bethlehem was innocent, holy, immaculate. "My Beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest amongst ten thousand." In this Holy Infant—the Word made Flesh—did the Eternal Father find His delight, because, as St. Gregory remarks, "in Him alone was found no sin." Let us,

then, take comfort in the blessed thought that He has come down from Heaven, that through His Cross and Passion, His Death and Burial, He might communicate His innocence to us. For His merits are boundless. And if we only gain their application for our sin-sick souls, we shall be changed from outcasts to members of the spiritual Israel, from death to life, from sinners to saints. In His Precious Blood-shedding and unfathomable love, therefore, let us repose all our trust and confidence. For His sake let us continually and patiently seek fresh grace and strength, and so we shall find, and find in abundance; receiving from the Treasury of God more than either we desire or deserve.

3. Again: when the Word was made Flesh,—when Christ was born at Bethlehem, He was wrapped in swaddling clothes. He, Who was God from everlasting, the Great Creator,—Whose attributes are might and majesty,—obediently permitted Himself to be bound by a creature, His Mother Mary. His little Hands and Feet were confined by swaddling clothes,—types of those scourge-cords by which He should hereafter suffer. But He was not only to be found wrapped

in swaddling clothes, but also "lying in a manger." Not in the arms of His Mother, but in a manger. O hard and miserable resting-place for the King of Kings! O wonderful mystery of love! So soon as He was born, He desired to be placed on the straw, in order to teach us the need of mortifying our fleshly lusts and appetites. For the world had been lost by sensual pleasures. Through them Adam sinned. By them his descendants transgressed even still more deeply. So the Word was made Flesh, to teach us the necessity of suffering; and He began to teach it as a little Child; for He chose for Himself a manger-cradle and a bed of straw.

If, then, the Holy Child willed to be bound in swaddling clothes for love of us, shall we not strive to love Him more and more? And if, three and thirty years afterwards, He willed to be still further bound, like a criminal going to execution, led as a lamb to the slaughter, and nailed to the Tree of Calvary,—leaving it not until His Human Soul had been parted from His Body,—surely, in return, we shall ask ever to be bound to Him by the cords of divine love. Let us, then, strive to love Him more and

more; and ever remember His words, "If ye love Me, keep My commandments."

But He was also "lying in a manger." Was, then, the Agony in the Garden, the Nails and the Spear, the Crown of Thorns and the Precious Death, not enough: but must He also add to these beforehand the sufferings of His Infancy? Even so. For He was thy Redeemer, and His whole earthly life from the time that He was born of Mary,—yea, even from the day that the Word was made Flesh,—to the darkened hour when she stood beside His deathbed,—the hard wood of the Cross,—was a life of suffering to satisfy the divine justice for thy sins. He lay upon the hard manger-bed that thou mightest rest everlastingly upon Abraham's bosom. He suffered in the Bethlehem manger that thou mightest rejoice in His Father's Palace in the City of Peace. Woe, then, to us, if after so many years of transgression we fail to imitate Him by suffering here below. Lord Jesus, may Thy Will be done. We have deserved hell, but Thou, by suffering, hast gained for us Heaven: from henceforth we will suffer too. Grant us, therefore, Thy grace and strength. And though our sufferings be many and mighty,

yet shall St. Paul's words ever console us :—
“ The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed.” Only through much tribulation shall we enter into the kingdom of God.

4. Again : when our Blessed Saviour was born, He was likewise poor. Though He was the eternal and sole-begotten Son of the Lord of the whole earth, yet was He brought into this world in a manger, the home of the ox and the ass. His earthly all—save the love of Mary, His Mother, and Joseph, His foster-father—were the swaddling clothes with which He was swathed. And though, unseen to mortal eye, the heavenly multitude knelt around in awe and adoration, they relieved not His self-chosen poverty. Had He been born in a palace, amid the splendour of an earthly court, the great and the mighty of this world would have approached and thronged round, and He would have won the respect of men. But He willed to become poor : “ Though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich.” “ The more vile He was for me, the more dear He is to me,” writes St. Bernard ; and such a blessed sentiment should be ours like-

wise. For the Poverty of Christ is great riches to us; because a remembrance of it should ever incite us most earnestly to despise the riches of earth and seek for the treasures of Heaven. From this day, then, we will desire no other riches than the abounding blessings of Thy Love. Henceforth, our aim shall be that the fleeting and idle vanities of this world shall no longer have dominion over our souls. For as yet what have they brought us? We have too long sought only after worldly goods—the treasures laid up where the rust and moth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal—and when found they have continually turned to woe. The riches and delights of earth have become thorns and gall. Therefore, Lord Jesus, do Thou detach us from all earthly affections, that so we may become worthy of Thy Love. We will renounce all if we can but possess Thee. Thou art our Hope, our Consolation and our Delight, as thou wilt become also, at last, our exceeding Great Reward !

III. Finally, then, let us so learn this solemn Christmas mystery of the Word made Flesh, that we may profit by it both here and hereafter. We have seen in what way

Holy Scripture teaches the doctrine, and how the Church still further explains and defines it. We have lingered also round the manger at Bethlehem to meditate upon so great a condescension on the part of the Word, Who was from everlasting; and have dwelt especially upon His Birth, His Infancy and His Poverty; that so we might survey the central mystery of the Incarnation,—together with those lesser mysteries, which radiate from it,—from every point of view. Then, let us no longer believe only, but believe and act simultaneously. We have sadly too many professions and too few deeds. Let us make manifest our love of Christ therefore, by loving those who represent Him here on earth. Let us go forth with gifts from our abundant stores, to dispense to those who have not. If, in social commemoration of Christmas blessings, our homes at this season are bright and happy; if our tables are laden with the good things of this world, and our friends gather around the hearth to welcome and be welcomed; let us remember that there are the poor and the outcast, the homeless and the wanderer to be tendered and cared for, for the sake of Christ. Their path is dark, their future uncertain, their hearts are heavy. With but

too many, doubly so; because sin is supreme, and God is forgotten. With them Christmas brings no joys. Let us remember them, therefore, both as to body and soul. The pleasures of our feasts, when the harp and the viol sounds, will not be diminished if we can know that any of these houseless ones have been sheltered from sleet and wind, or the hungry fed even from the crumbs of our tables. The lights will appear to burn brighter and the holly to sparkle more keenly, if either the temporal or spiritual benedictions of Christmas are rained down upon the uncared-for and the neglected. They lie side by side with us, even at our very doors. The poor and the aged, therefore, the orphan and the widow, will render back their prayers and intercessions; and your joys shall become deeper and more true. And remember, that this is your Master's injunction. Christ, Who became poor for our sakes, bids you seek out the poor, and give them of your abundance: "The poor ye have always with you." "Whoso hath this world's goods," saith St. John, "and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his compassion from him, how dwelleth the Love of God in him?" So, then, as every opportunity comes, let it be

seized. Let us hear the message of peace—
“Peace on earth and good will towards men”—
—and help to make that peace a reality.
So, by a following of Christ, shall we gain
His promised reward. So, if we persevere
and faint not, will the Son of God become
spiritually born in our souls. And each
succeeding Christmas will produce richer
blessings than before. “Work,” therefore,
“while it is day.” Labour with vigour,
with system and in faith; so shall your
labour not be in vain in the Lord. With
all possible affection invite the Holy Child
to take up His abode with you; beg of Him
—who knows your poverty, your weakness
and your want—to prepare a place for you,
and furnish your souls with all those orna-
ments of righteousness and grace which
are suitable to His spiritual birth in your
hearts; and then you shall have perfect
peace. So will your journey in faith to
Bethlehem lead you in due course and in
reality to Jerusalem, even to the City of
God, to the mansions of the Father, to the
Presence of Christ Jesus, and to an eternal
home, free for ever from sin or sorrow, from
temptation or suffering, from want or care.
God grant it to us for the sake of “the
Holy Child Jesus!” Amen.

The First Sunday after Christmas.

THE NAME OF JESUS.

"Thou shalt call His Name JESUS: for He shall save His people from their sins."—ST. MATTHEW i. 21.

THESE words, which occur in the Gospel for to-day, are a portion of that message which was delivered by the Archangel Gabriel to Joseph, the espoused husband of Mary; and that part of them, which gives the Sacred Name of Jesus to our Blessed Lord, had been likewise delivered by the same Archangel to His Mother months previously:—"Thou shalt conceive in Thy womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His Name Jesus."

Now the text contains two distinct portions. First, that which records the giving of a Name to the Only-begotten of the Father; and secondly, the reason why the particular Name given was bestowed. Thus divided, therefore, let us proceed to its consideration.

I. The Name of Jesus. "Thou shalt call his Name Jesus." This was part of a message from Heaven, sent from the Eternal

Father, through an Angel, to Her who should conceive and bring forth the God Man. He was born then, as at this time, of a pure Virgin, and from the very day of His Nativity was called Jesus. "Being found in fashion as a man He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him and given Him a Name, which is above every Name: that at the Name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in Heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth: and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father." Again: we read in the Song of Solomon, "Thy Name is as ointment," or oil, "poured forth." Even so, remarks St. Bernard, because, as oil is both light, food, and medicine, so is the Name of Jesus light to the mind, food to the heart, and medicine to the soul. It is light to the mind, because by the Sacred Name, a world which lay in darkness and the shadow of death, saw light and immortality brought to light by the preaching of the Gospel. The Name of Jesus, too, is food which nourishes our hearts, because Its very sound reminds us of what our Blessed

Saviour has done for us. Hence, this Sacred Name gives us comfort in tribulation, strength to walk in the way of salvation, courage to withstand our threefold enemies—the world, the flesh, and the devil—and inflames us with love for Him who bore It, when we remember how manifold were His sufferings to ensure our salvation. It is likewise medicine to the soul, because It renders it strong and competent to resist the temptations of our foes. The devils fear It, for the “things under the earth,” as St. Paul tells us, bow at the Name of Jesus, and shrink away discomfited when It is uttered. If, therefore, we constantly invoke our Blessed Saviour, Christ Jesus, He will be near us, and strengthen us, so that we may successfully resist temptation, and finally triumph through Him. The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble: the Name of the God of Jacob defend thee. I will call upon the Lord, which is worthy to be praised, so shall I be safe from mine enemies. And what mysteries and heavenly truths does this Name contain! Creation, preservation, redemption, and justification: a present hope, a future reward. The love of God which was before the worlds began. His pardoning

mercy, His goodness manifest day by day, His long-suffering, His patience, His power. So many and so great that no tongue can express them or no heart conceive! So, then, we learn that the Name of Jesus is a Name of Love. When we utter it we are reminded of His amazing and marvellous charity, for He left His Father's glory, He emptied Himself, He became Man, He suffered, He died, that we might regain that which had been lost by the sin of Adam, and reach at last that heavenly home, which God has prepared for those who love Him.

Again: the Name of Jesus is a Name of virtue and of power. In His name the churches of God were planted throughout the world. In His Name the Apostles went forth to preach the everlasting Gospel, and wrought numerous miracles and wonders. By Peter and John, in His Name, was the lame man restored at the beautiful gate of the temple: and on other occasions, by a similar power, were even greater marvels performed. The Name of Jesus was their strength, their song, and their salvation, as,—amid trials and sorrows, stripes, imprisonments, and distresses,—they went forth to break the stubborn ranks of the devil, and leave their lasting impress

on a sinful world. By It, have sinners become saints, and martyrs have overcome death. The fire, the rack, and the sword have been willingly endured in the Name and patience of Jesus, and at last the rest has arrived. By It, men have confessed Christ, and withstood an evil and corrupt world. The sinful lusts of the flesh and the devil, too, have done their worst: but the Name of Jesus has become an ointment for the wound, and so the cruel thorns of sin have no longer pierced and distressed the heart. The poor in this world's goods, likewise, have bought wine and milk without money and without price, and have learned to love their Saviour and their God. High as well as low, rich as well as poor, have through the Name of Jesus overcome evil habits, and taken a closer walk with God. Kings and princes have yielded themselves captive to the King of Kings, submitting themselves and their kingdoms to the blessed yoke of the Gospel. They have known Christ Jesus to be the Prince of Peace, and have owned Him as the Lord of all. O blessed kingdom of righteousness—O blissful kingdom of mercy and grace—when wilt thou extend thy conquests throughout the whole world? O Saviour of

the world, when shall the nations that sit in darkness own Thy sway, and kings and people, with one heart and one will, bow down to give praise to Thy Name? When shall the Morians' land stretch out her hand unto God, and the earth be filled with a knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the seas?

Furthermore; the Name of Jesus is a Name of Mercy. It is this, because it shows forth to us all the divine attributes; stooping, as it were, to the work of our redemption, in order to raise us up from the sleep of death and the pit of destruction, to bring us to a life of immortality and a rock that is secure. This very Name preaches to us by its sweet sound the majestic love of God, so clearly manifest in the wonderful mystery of the Incarnation. It reveals to us its height, its depth, its length, and its breadth. It tells us why God was made Man, when Christ was born at Bethlehem. It preaches to us of His infinite love. It reminds us of His patient long-suffering, of His willingness to pardon, of His continued intercession, of His promised reward. So that it cannot fail of being ever a Name of mercy, a Name of comfort, a Name of salvation. It reminds us of Him

Who first preached deliverance to the captive, freedom to the slave, a release to the debtor, a healing to the sick, and a ransom for all. It supports the pilgrim—worn and heart-sick—in his journey, and comforts him under affliction; it is his refuge in all dangers, his support in all temptations; it places before him the Source and Author of every good and perfect gift; and it encourages him to pray for all that he may need, knowing that if he prays in the Name and for the sake of Jesus his Redeemer, Almighty God will most surely hear and answer his prayers. “For there is none other Name under Heaven given amongst men whereby we must be saved.” Therefore, especially, is it a Name of Mercy, for every manifestation of the loving-kindness and bounty of Almighty God is made for the sake of Him Who bore it. Temporal gifts are showered down and bestowed in abundance,—spring and summer, autumn and winter; dew and sunshine, rain and wind,—for, “all things were made by Him;” as likewise also every spiritual blessing and each bestowal of grace. The washing of regeneration by which original sin is blotted out; the merciful pardon of actual sin; the promise of a future reward in

the heavenly mansions; strength and arms for the warfare; the Food of Angels—the True Manna from above; the grace of orders, the gifts of the Spirit; and the Last Benediction. All procured by the Blood of Jesus, all imparted for the sake of Jesus, all to be obtained by the Name of Jesus. So then, this Name of Jesus is a Name of Mercy.

Would, therefore, that in the hour of temptation and the moment of weakness we had always called upon Him, for then He would have become our defence and our shield! “Thou art my strong rock and my castle: be Thou also my guide, and lead me for Thy Name’s sake.” Would that we had always called upon Him, for then should we never have been overcome by the enemy of souls! Still let us hope for all things through His Most Holy Name. I can do all things through Christ Who strengtheneth me. And He will write upon our poor hearts His merciful and loving Name; so that in all our temptations and trials, in all our sorrows and afflictions, we may ever remember and invoke Him Who is the Author of our strength and the Captain of our salvation. For in His Name we shall find every good. Without It, we should be of all men the most miserable.

If we are grievously afflicted, and find the burden almost too difficult and irksome to bear, it will console us to know how much more afflicted He was both in Gethsemane, with the soldiers, and at Calvary. If we are disheartened—as well we may be—at the number and malice of our sins, we should recollect that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. If we are tempted, the Name of Jesus will give us strength to resist: for as He triumphed over death and Hell, so may those who put their trust in Him. Finally, if the light of our faith be grown dim, and the love of our hearts waxed cold, we may surely gain fresh fervour by remembering the merciful and astounding charity of our Saviour Christ. Then Lord, we will henceforth love Thee more and more. Thou shalt be our only love. To Thee will we render heart and soul. Thy Name shall be invoked at all times. We desire to die with It upon our lips; for It is a Name of Hope, a Name of Love, a Name of Virtue and Power, a Name of Mercy, and a Name of Salvation. “It is better to trust in the Lord than to put any confidence in princes. All nations encompassed me round about, but in the Name of the Lord will I destroy

them. They kept me in on every side, they kept me in, I say, on every side, but in the Name of the Lord will I destroy them. The Lord is my strength and my song, and has become my salvation."

Thus much, then, for the first portion of the text—"Thou shalt call His Name JESUS." Now for the reason, which is recorded in, and shall be considered with, the second part:—"For He shall save His people from their sins."

II. When Adam and Eve fell, and sin began to increase in influence,—when the garden of Eden was no longer their home, and they were sent out as aliens and wanderers into a world upon which the curse of God had fallen, they were graciously promised the future Advent of One Who should bruise the serpent's head, and restore mankind to his original state. If they looked back, there was the temptation, the forbidden fruit, the knowledge that they were naked, and the Angel with the flaming sword—all here was misery and gloom; but if they looked forward, the mercy of God directed their gaze to a break in the clouds, and to the aurora of the Incarnation

His Son. The promise was laden with hope of life eternal, and that promise should stand firm and immutable for ever. The righteous heard it and rejoiced. It came to Abraham, when he learnt that in his seed should all the nations of the earth be blessed. Moses remembered it when he spoke of the Prophet whom the Lord their God should raise up like unto himself. In his own name and office Joshua was a type of our Blessed Lord. The Redeemer of the world, likewise, was the theme of David's song, and the hope of David's heart. Though ye have lien among the pots, yet will ye be as the wings of a dove that is covered with silver, and her feathers yellow with gold. The prophets, both before and after the captivity, speak of the coming Messiah. Isaiah of His Person and office. Though He should be a Man of sorrows, acquainted with grief — though He should be led as a lamb to the slaughter — though He should make His grave with the wicked, in His death, yet should He bind up the broken-hearted, comfort those in tribulation, strengthen the feeble knees, and become the Corner-stone of His immutable everlasting Church. He should be the

world's Redeemer, and the Saviour of them that believe. With other prophets — like those who taught when the eastern captivity had come to an end—he prophesied of One Who should loosen the chains of the captive, and set the prisoner free. And when stone upon stone was built up to render Mount Sion again the joy of the whole earth, the seers of God, having it more and more distinctly revealed to them, spake of His office and character. His Name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. In that Name should Judah rejoice, and Israel dwell in safety. He should be to them, it was told, more powerful than Moses, and a greater Leader than Joshua of old. His Name should be Emmanuel, His Priesthood eternal, His kingdom worldwide, His power divine, His grace transcendent, for He should be the Saviour of an evil world. He should speak and the change should take place; He should command and the legions of evil should obey. In Him should the types of old rest; towards Calvary should the shadows of yore bend their course. And the work of redemption should be completed when the promised

Sacrifice had been offered. "Thou shalt call His Name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins."

And is it not so? Every gift both temporal and eternal, every grace both for time and eternity, are bestowed by God for the sake of His Son. Born alienated from Him, we are, through Baptism, by adoption made His very sons; and though we sin, and fail so often to remember our spiritual relationship, yet will God pardon again and again. We are perverse, disobedient, and wilful, while God is patient, long-suffering, and abounding in mercy. Continually He rains down blessings more than either we desire or deserve. In the spring and summer of life, when we are as yet unacquainted with the ways of the world and the blighting influence of sin, as well as in its autumn and winter, when too often the conscience is seared, the will crooked, and the load burdensome, He waits to pardon and absolve. He is full of mercy, long-suffering, and goodness. He looks upon the Face of His Son, still marked with the scars of a thorny crown—the Wounds are ever being pleaded—and remembers the transgression no more. The Lamb of God taketh away

the sins of the world. He is our Friend, for He makes us at one with God ; our elder Brother, our Great High Priest, our Prophet, and our King—the Saviour of them that believe. “Thou shalt call His Name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins.”

What more, then, could we desire than to find ourselves having a part and lot in this matter? It is a question which concerns us all, whatever our station, age, or capacity. At least this is true, that sin has done and is doing its work. The devil never tires of labouring continually to people the caverns of Hell ; his antagonism to God is unchanged ; and he works with a determined will and by a thousand varying ways to hinder the progress of salvation. He stands in direct opposition to Him Who saves His people from their sins. Every inlet of the soul is a point for aggression. Every sinful weakness is weakened and made more sinful. Every lust of the heart, every evil desire, is too readily satisfied, for he stands by simply to ruin and destroy. The temple of grace, which was overthrown by the sin of the first Adam, must never by the instrumentality of the Second be reared anew. Every

stone of grace must be crumbled to dust, so that the spiritual fabric is never again commenced. Though there be a Jesus, a Saviour to fortify and bless, yet must the work of grace be hindered, and the object of grace defeated. Only let the Love of God be forgotten and the Will of God neglected, and then Satan and his angels rejoice exceedingly, for their victory is certain and complete. But if, on the other hand, the armour of Christ—the shield, the sword, and the breast-plate—be worn and worked with ; if transgressions be repented of ; if pardon be sealed ; if Christ become a Saviour ; if the soldier be valiant, then is the enemy discomfited. The Lord is our Defence, the Holy One of Israel is our King. God's Hand shall hold us fast, God's Arm shall strengthen us. The enemy shall not be able to do us violence, the son of wickedness shall not hurt us. Christ Jesus only needs on our part repentance and a giving up of our wills to Him, and then He becomes our Friend and Saviour. "Thou shalt call His Name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins."

And the present time—the commencement of another year—should remind us

forcibly of the great necessity of working in God and for God towards this end. Salvation is within the reach of all. The poor in this world's goods, as well as their more favoured brethren of plenty, need to learn the lesson of to-day. Our day here is one of probation for eternity. We should labour here so that at last we may rest where they rest not day and night singing the canticle of adoration. But yesterday another span of this world's measurement passed for ever away. It was and it is not. Its cares and sorrows; its joys and hopes; its warnings, calls, and graces, remain for the Day of Judgment. They were sent to work a change, to mould a character, to perfect salvation. He Who saves His people from their sins saw the weeks pass away, and, in too many cases, the offer of salvation slighted. And yet, though such may be aliens, He is a Saviour still, and desires to become a Friend. Let the new year, therefore, be the commencement of a new life. Never fear the unfulfilled pledges of old, or the shattered attempts to construct the spiritual building. Amend the broken amendments, and strive to walk in the way of salvation. The wilderness has to be trodden

—a wilderness that knows no shelter, a desert, parched and barren—but yet there is One Who will become a Captain and a Guide. The true Joshua—His Name is Jesus—will lead the way. It will be a path of sufferings, a way of sorrows, but it leads to the heavenly Canaan. If any man will come after Me let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. Then shall the Jordan be passed in security, and its waters cause no terror. Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me, Thy rod and Thy staff comfort me. And the end shall be rest everlasting.

Therefore, Lord Jesus, we look to Thee. Thou art our Saviour and our Guide. By Thee we obtain pardon, justification, strength, and a hope of glory. Thou art the Son of the Living God, the Brightness of Eternal Life, the Splendour of the Father. Thou art the Treasure of the faithful, the Comfort of the afflicted, the Good Shepherd, our Way and our Life; the Teacher of the Evangelists, the Master of the Apostles, the Strength of the Martyrs, the Light of Confessors, and the Crown of all Saints. Therefore, Lord Jesus, we come to Thee.

Thou art a Saviour, and we are sinners.
 Thou art in Heaven and we on earth.
 Draw us, then, to Thyself. Wean us from
 the world, and teach us to fix our hearts on
 the joys that fade not away. Be Thou our
 treasure and our exceeding great reward.
 Give us to have a perpetual fear and love of
 Thy Holy Name. Hear us when It passes
 our lips, answer when we call. Shower
 down Thy gifts when we cry to Thee.
 Thou wast born for us, Thou wast tempted
 for us. By Thy Cross and Passion, by Thy
 Precious Death and Burial, by Thy glorious
 Resurrection and Ascension, Lord Jesu
 deliver us, and all who call upon Thy Name.
 Amen.



The Festival of the Epiphany.**THE MANIFESTATION OF CHRIST.**

“When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And when they were come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His Mother, and fell down, and worshipped Him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto Him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.”—ST. MATTHEW ii. 10, 11.

“IN thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed,” was a portion of God’s gracious promise to Abraham, the father of the faithful; and the first fulfilment of that pledge took place as upon this day. The remembrance of the promises of God, as well to our first parents, as to His chosen people of old, had never been altogether forgotten. The nations that lay in darkness had waited patiently for the coming of the True Light, and for the promised redemption by the Messiah. A memory of the prophecy—like a strata of silver in some mine of baser ore—ran through the traditional records of many an ancient people; so indelibly had its importance been stamped upon the minds of their ancestors. And, although, for cen-

turies the Divine Will of God had been almost exclusively revealed to one particular nation, yet the very prophecies of that nation's seers had forefold the final ingathering of the Gentiles. As yet God had made Mount Sion His special resting-place upon earth. Here will I dwell, for I have a delight therein. And though, since the captivity, the particular symbol of His Presence had departed, and the breastplate of the High Priest was silent in its token, or dark in its gleam, yet the morning and evening sacrifices were still offered, the chants still arose, and the worship was carried on day by day. But when Christ was born, and the star of Bethlehem shone, then the time of the Gentiles had arrived. Soon, neither alone at Jerusalem nor Samaria, should the Father be worshipped ; but in every clime throughout the world. Soon Cornelius should receive Baptism, and Paul begin his mission amongst the Gentile nations. Soon Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia should learn the glad tidings of salvation, and rejoice in the knowledge of Christ Jesus.

And all this was prefigured and promised by the coming of the magi to Bethlehem,—

by the Manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles. They who had long watched the heavens and read the stars, night by night, in the far distant east, knew that the watches were passing, and that the day had well-nigh broken. "Behold the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people, but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee, and the Gentiles shall come to Thy Light, and the Kings to the brightness of Thy rising." So, as that star arose and moved silently along the darkened sky, did the eastern magi mark its path, and follow its guidance. They crossed mountain and hill, lonely plain and fertile valley, when the sun was up, and when the night was on, to see Him who was the True Light of the world. No distance damped their ardour, no difficulties blunted their aim. On and on they came towards the valleys of Israel, and the city of David. "So the star which they saw in the east went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was." And then follow the words of the text, "When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And when they were come into the house, they saw the

young Child with Mary His Mother, and fell down, and worshipped Him : and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto Him gifts ; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.

Now, in considering these words, let us, for the sake of clearness, divide the subject of them into three heads :

1. First, the particular question itself, viz.,—the Epiphany, or the Manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles.

2. Secondly, the Faith and offerings of the Wise Men to whom Christ was manifested.

3. And, thirdly, the example which, by their deeds, is placed before us for our acceptance.

I. Let us, then, in the first place, call to mind the wonderful ways of Divine Providence in giving such early notice of the birth of Christ Jesus. The Jews learnt it by the Angel and the heavenly host sent to the shepherds of Bethlehem ; the Gentiles, by the mysterious star which hung in the heavens above. Balaam had thus prophesied in a century long passed away : “ I shall see Him, but not now ; I shall behold

Him, but not nigh. There shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth." So, likewise, Isaiah :—" Kings shall see and arise ; princes, also, shall worship, because of the Lord that is faithful, and the Holy One of Israel, and He shall choose thee." Now, though there was nothing in the various nations of the earth which could possibly merit any mercy from God,—for a gross darkness hung over the world, sin had increased and the path of man was crooked,—yet, not only was His mercy made manifest, by withholding a punishment which was justly due ; but He vouchsafed to manifest to them His Only-begotten Son, who had taken flesh in Mary's womb, and call them to the knowledge and faith of Christ. Without this, what were the favors and gifts of nature ; what were wealth, honors, fair fields, and fruitful vineyards ; of what value was the gold of Ophir, or the wealth of the east ? Had this knowledge of God, and of His Dear Son, been wanting, all must have been dark and uncertain. Therefore, should the isles of the Gentiles rejoice, and the hearts of the Gentiles leap for joy, for the Lord has made

known His Will, and the Epiphany of Christ has been !

Let us remember, likewise, that in all probability this star, which announced the birth of our Blessed Lord, was seen by all the eastern nations. They gazed upon it, no doubt, with amazement and wonder. It was something new, and a marvel. It portended a change, and an Advent: but they merely looked, and failed to seek Him, Who was called the Desire of the Nations. Only a few came. There were, doubtless, many words of astonishment and inquiry. The old prophecies were sought after, and the ancient traditions searched out, but yet there were but few deeds of faith. Too much talk and too little labour. Many who gazed upon that star remained in darkness, and died in infidelity. But the magi set out without delay, in quest of the promised Prince; nothing doubting, but depending wholly and entirely on the support of God, and were happily brought to His footstool at Bethlehem. First they took their journey to Jerusalem, asking, "Where is He that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen His star in the east, and are come to worship Him:" and soon after they found Him in

whom their souls delighted. Well, therefore, may they be termed the *Wise Men*.

But we read in the Gospel for to-day,—from which the text is taken,—that, though these *Wise Men* rejoiced with exceeding great joy, “Herod, the King,” and “all Jerusalem with him,” were troubled. And no wonder : for, upon inquiry of the chief priests and scribes, he found that Christ should be born in Bethlehem ; and he knew that his power would soon come to an end ; for now the sceptre should depart from Judah. And all Jerusalem was troubled with him. The scribes and the Pharisees, the priests and the people, either feared the advent of the Shiloh, or expected only a temporal king. Whichever it was, the monarch and his subjects were troubled.

What a figure we have here of those souls which are so wedded to this cheating world, —its pleasures, its lusts, its desires,—as to be more afraid of parting with them, than of losing an everlasting kingdom ! When summoned by a message from heaven, or called upon by some unusual sign, to forsake their sins, and go and seek after Christ, they are, perhaps, temporarily troubled ; but they refuse either to search Him out until they

find, or to learn His ways. Like Herod, they strive to destroy the Christ, Who desires to be born in their souls. Or, like the chief priests and scribes of the people, they are ready to point out the Redeemer of mankind to their neighbours, while they refuse to accept Him themselves.

Therefore, beloved in the faith, let us learn our first lesson of to-day with obedience and promptness. Let us seek Christ as the Wise Men sought Him, in faith, and we shall not fail to see Him face to Face. Let us readily comply with the abounding graces and inspirations of God, and never neglect His blessed calls and warnings. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he reap." Let us, then, act as well as talk. Let us set out on our journey, if it be not already commenced, and, in God's good time, if we faint not, we shall reach the place of everlasting repose. The star of Bethlehem will be our guide; and when first we see it, we shall rejoice with exceeding great joy. O, radiant and precious light, which conducts the soul to Christ, ever given to those who, like the Wise Men, are earnest in seeking Him, mayest thou guide us to the Light of Light,

—to the manger of Bethlehem,—and so, finally, to the heavenly Jerusalem !

II. We now proceed to a consideration of the faith and offerings of the Wise Men to whom Christ was manifested. As to their faith, none can fail to be struck with the deepest wonder and admiration at it. They began their journey,—attended by such a retinue, as was suitable for them in their visit to One Who was to be born King of the whole earth,—when, lo ! instead of this they find, to all appearance, in that stable over which rested the star, a lonely maiden, with her newly-born Son, and Joseph the carpenter of Nazareth. In lieu of pomp and magnificence, they discover only poverty and humility. In place of a royal cradle and kingly robe, merely a manger of straw, and a Child in swaddling clothes. But their faith was a gift from God, though they were without the pale of the then visible Church. The overflowing cup of His bounties had been tasted by them, and they were not shocked at the poverty, or lowliness, which met their gaze. They looked not with a worldly eye. They knew the nature and qualities of Mary's Divine Offspring. And

so, we read in the text, "When they were come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His Mother, and fell down and worshipped Him." Thus their deeds as well as their words, indicated the faith that existed in their hearts. They fell down and worshipped Him. With humble reverence and profound adoration, they bowed down their bodies at His Feet. O, beloved, is this our posture? Do we worship God with our bodies as well as our spirits, which are His? Do we imitate the humility of the Wise Men, by a similar external adoration?

Again: we read that when this act of homage had been performed, "they opened their treasures," and "presented unto Him gifts; gold, frankincense, and myrrh." Now here, likewise, their faith was also made manifest once again. The quality of these gifts indicated their faith in Him to whom they were presented. They gave Him gold, because they believed Him to be the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. They knew that He was the King who should reign in righteousness. His was the Throne of David. He was to rule for ever, and of His Kingdom, they believed, there should be no end.

In this respect, also, must we likewise

imitate them. We must offer Him the tribute of our gold, as to our True King. In other words, we must daily present Him with our souls stamped with His Own Most Blessed Image, and brightened with His Own Divine Love. When certain of the Jews asked Him concerning the payment of tribute to the Romans, He declared, "Render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and unto God the things which are God's." Now our souls are, by adoption, God's. They were made His at the font. They were stamped with His Image, when the sign of the Son of Man was drawn upon our foreheads, in order that, by perfect love, we should ever give them in tribute to Him. Render, therefore, unto God, the things which are God's. In fervent and sincere acts of love, offer your whole souls to Him. Do this day by day, and you shall have given Him your gold.

But the Wise Men also brought frankincense. Now incense, in the Bible, is regarded as an emblem of Prayer; was expressly ordered to be used by Almighty God for the service of the Tabernacle, and expresses the worship we pay to Him. The gift of frankincense, therefore, signified that

the givers believed the Child Jesus to be Very God. Moreover, it symbolized, or shadowed forth, His character, as our Great High Priest. In that capacity He was to make such a sacrifice as should be acceptable to the Eternal, and reconcile man with God.

So, then, in this particular also, even as before, must we strive to imitate the eastern magi: we must always remember that He is a Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedeck, and that He ever liveth to make intercession for us. So must we daily offer to Him—morning, noonday and night, at the hours of incense—the oblations of ourselves, our souls and our bodies. We must pray daily, pray constantly, pray with devotion. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. We must aim, therefore, at perfuming our every action, our daily lives and conversations, by the sweet and acceptable incense of Prayer.

There was a third gift, too, viz. :—that of myrrh. “They presented unto him gifts gold, frankincense, and myrrh.” And there was a significance in this gift also, and a lesson likewise. For, in addition to the gold

of Divine love,—as acknowledging His Kingship,—and the frankincense of fervent prayer,—in testimony of His Godhead and Priesthood,—we must add the myrrh of self-denial and mortification. Our Lord Himself taught the great necessity of self-denial on the part of His followers, if they would become His indeed ; and we pray in one of the Collects* that He may “ give us grace to use such abstinence, that our flesh being subdued to the spirit, we may ever obey His godly motions in righteousness and true holiness.” So that the necessity of these steps is self-evident. Now myrrh has a bitter taste, and yet it is a most wholesome bitter. Moreover, it enjoys the peculiar property of keeping bodies from corruption. Thus, we may see in it an emblem of the mortification of our sinful lusts and passions ; disagreeable and bitter enough to our natures, but eminently wholesome and needful in preserving our souls from the corruption of sin. So that this gift of myrrh, like those of gold and frankincense, it should be the daily aim of the true Christian to make. His thoughts, words, and deeds, should, as it were, be duly seasoned by mortification, in order to restrain

* Collect for the First Sunday in Lent.

them from evil, and direct them in the way of salvation.

But myrrh was presented to our Blessed Lord, because, being used by eastern nations in the burial of their dead, it signified that He should die. And so it was. The Son of Man suffered many things, and was rejected of the Jews. He was crucified, died, He was buried, He rose again. He died for our sins, He rose again for our justification. By His precious death He volunteered to redeem all mankind from eternal death. So that myrrh, for this reason likewise, was an appropriate gift, and indicated the faith of the magi. Let us then, by labour by prayer, and by self-denial, strive to follow their example. If we have sinned grievously He is very far off, and our journey to Him will be long and tedious; but the Blessed Spirit of God, who guides the souls of the faithful, while He illuminates the Church of Christ Jesus, will be a Star to point the way and a strength to support the weak. If we be our Guide we need not fear the end.

III. Thirdly, and finally, let us consider the example which, by the deeds of the Wise Men, is so distinctly set before us.

We may be able intellectually to apprehend all the benefits which the Incarnation might be supposed to bring into the world ; we may recognize, as the great majority most readily do, the abstract value of Christianity in civilizing distant countries, and be not unwilling to patronize the Church, or bestow a modified admiration upon Her schemes. We may talk glibly of the importance of the Gospel Message, while, on the other hand, we maintain that this doctrine or that doctrine,—ever considered vital of old,—is now-a-days opposed to the spread of information and knowledge ; or even—to go a step further—we may lead highly moral lives, while all this is admitted ; and yet, if we have not faith, the stalk is but rootless, and the sun shall most surely scorch it up. We are like the chief priests and scribes of old, we know far more than we practise of our duty towards God and our neighbour, and we are wholly unlike the Wise Men from the East. In fact we do not believe. We have not faith. We refuse to accept this or that portion of God's revealed Will, because it is beyond our comprehension. We conceive that the Infinite ought to be intelligible to the finite ; and so, like Thomas, we will

not believe. We stand by to review the various doctrines of the Gospel, as they pass by in order, accepting this, or rejecting the other, according to our fancies or predilections. When we are called to believe in Christ, we remain as we were. When we are invited to seek Him out, we never commence the journey. We see the Star of His Truth, but we do not follow it, because we have not faith. And so it is gloom and uncertainty. It was still night, and Jesus was not yet come unto them.

And not having faith, without which,—as we read in Holy Scripture,—it is impossible to please God, we cannot either love Him heartily, pray to him earnestly or effectually, or labour in a work of self-abnegation. And so we remain far away from the Land of Canaan and the City of Jerusalem. We still lie in darkness and the shadow of death. There has been an Epiphany, but, as far as we are concerned, it might as well never have taken place. In our hearts there has been no manifestation of Christ, because the works of the flesh find there so secure a home. There is year by year, as to-day, a solemn commemoration or remembrance of that Epiphany: but still not for us. Though

the Gentiles are fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of God's promise in Christ; and though this truth is proclaimed continually, yet but few—as at the Nativity of Christ—come to Him. Here one and there another, while the great majority remain far away. O may we be led, upon this very Festival, so to ask that we may receive, so to seek that we may find! May God grant that having heard of Christ, having seen His Star in the east, we may come to worship Him; and, having worshipped Him here in time, we may worship Him for ever hereafter!

One other point for consideration demands our notice. "The Wise Men," we read in the verse following the text, "being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way," to teach us that after finding Christ, we must return no more to His and our enemies, Sin and Satan; but must make the best of our way to our own true country by a different road from that by which we left it. Our true country is Paradise. We left it by pride, by disobedience, and by lust. Our first parents gratified their sensual appetites by eating of the

forbidden fruit, and so lost their home. If we wish to return thither again, we must take quite another road. It must be the way of sorrows; by penitential tears, by humility, by mortification, by obedience, and then we shall reach Paradise once again.

We should remember, too, that this should be effected at once: for time is passing quickly away. The knowledge of God and of His Dear Son is being yearly more and more proclaimed to distant nations. The Church of the Living God is being planted amongst races, whose existence was almost unknown a few centuries ago. Our own portion of the Church is now no longer slumbering but her Bishops and Priests, duly commissioned, go forth with the glad tidings of salvation to the dark places of the earth, to bind up the broken-hearted, and preach deliverance to the captive. Northward and southward, eastward and westward, is the banner of the Cross being borne, to be unfurled in triumph, if it so please God, and to gather together the outcast into the One True Fold. The manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles is a work still daily progressing. "The sons of strangers shall build up thy walls, and their kings shall minister unto

thee : for in My wrath I smote thee : but in My favor I had mercy upon thee. Therefore thy gates shall be open continually : they shall not be shut day nor night : that men may bring unto thee the forces of the Gentiles, and that their kings may be brought." . . . "The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir tree, the pine tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of My sanctuary : and I will make the place of My Feet glorious." So that with this extension of Christ's kingdom the end is drawing nigh.

To sum up. Let us resolve at once, therefore, to imitate the three Wise Men in three particulars. Firstly, in their ready and faithful compliance with the Divine call ; secondly, in their care and diligence in inquiring after Christ ; and thirdly, in their perseverance. If we make these resolutions we shall succeed, with His grace, Who ever bestoweth help and strength in time of need. He will manifest Himself to us through faith ; He will direct us in our walk across the wilderness of this world, He will be our Friend and our Guide. Then, in due course, faith shall have a reward, when the Star of Truth has been followed in patience and obedience, in trouble

and affliction, in distresses and weariness. And, having known Him now by faith, we shall, after this life, have the fruition of His glorious Godhead, when we see Him face to Face, Who is the Root and Offspring of David, and the Bright and Morning Star. Which, God of His Infinite Mercy grant to all of us, for the sake of Jesus Christ His Only-begotten Son, our Saviour ! Amen.

The First Sunday after the Epiphany.

**OUR BLESSED LORD'S HIDDEN LIFE AND
SAYINGS.**

And He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but His Mother kept all these sayings in Her Heart.”—ST. LUKE ii. 51.

WHAT especial deed of manifestation, on the part of our Blessed Saviour, which the Church brings before our notice in the Gospel for this First Sunday after the Epiphany, is the Word or the Wisdom of God, manifesting Himself as a Child to the Jewish Doctors in the Temple.

It being the general custom of the Jews to go up to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover, our Blessed Lord Himself—being then twelve years old—accompanied Mary and Joseph thither, and remained there three days. “And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the Child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem, and Joseph and His Mother knew not of it.” Mary conceived that He was with Joseph, and Joseph imagined Him to be with Mary,

each "supposing Him to have been in the company." Amongst their kinsfolk and their acquaintance they sought Him but found Him not. All these three days, doubtless, he was employed in honoring His Eternal Father,—by watchings, prayers, and participations in the solemnities of the Jewish worship. "It came to pass that after three days they found Him in the Temple,"—every detail in our Blessed Lord's life thus teaching us some important lesson.

They found Him in the Temple. Seated amid the lawyers and doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions, He vouchsafed to display His wisdom and His knowledge, so that all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and His answers. And when they saw Him they were amazed, and His Mother said unto Him, "Son, why hast Thou thus dealt with us? Behold, Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing." Jesus had withdrawn Himself from them; they had lost Him Who was the joy of their soul, and upon Whom hung all their heart's affections. And in their humility they no doubt feared it was their own fault that He had departed from them, or that they had rendered themselves

unworthy of so Divine a charge. No wonder, then, that their grief was deep, or that in questioning Him they thus expressed their sorrow. He then graciously explains the cause of His stay at Jerusalem: "How is it that ye sought Me?" says the Divine Child, "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business? And they understood not the saying that He spake unto them."

Then comes the words of the text, which, by God's blessing, we will now proceed especially to consider:—"He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but His Mother kept all these sayings in Her Heart;" words which bear directly and especially upon the wondrous mystery of the Incarnation, the depths of which we are utterly unable to fathom!

And let us not say—as I would especially warn you against saying at the outset—that such mysteries ought not to be contemplated, and are far better left alone. For if so, why should they have been recorded? We know expressly that "all Holy Scripture is written for our learning;" and we might readily gather from the lives and writings of the good men of God that a

contemplation of every detail considered in faith,—in a true, humble, earnest, lively faith, nothing doubting,—cannot fail to be of the greatest possible service. For, if eternal life consists, as the Bible expressly teaches us, in a knowledge of God and of His Son Jesus Christ Whom He has sent; if God has indeed become Very and True Man; if in all things, sin alone excepted, He has made Himself like unto us; if, moreover, we cannot arrive at a knowledge of the Father, save and except by and through His Eternal Son, then it follows that the knowledge of the Sacred Humanity of the Incarnate Word, in every mysterious detail, in every wonderful record, is the most valuable and precious of all knowledge.

“The Sacred Humanity,” says a learned divine, “is that mirror of mirrors, in which we see reflected and brought within reach of our limited understanding, the infinite perfections and attributes of God. In that mirror we can contemplate His wisdom, His love, His mercy, His unspeakable condescension to us His creatures; and through the Sacred Humanity, God, who is immeasurably removed from us when considered in His Divine Essence and Nature, is brought

so near to us, that we can indeed exclaim that He is 'bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh,' and console ourselves with the thought that He Who once seemed so far off from us, and from Whom our sins had estranged us, has become, through the Incarnation, so one with ourselves, that we can justly claim Him as our own, and call Him not only our Lord and our God, but our Brother and our Friend."

And all this is true as regards the Childhood of the world's Redeemer. The more we meditate upon it the more shall we know of His love, and the deeper shall our love for Him become. And not alone to those who are striving to walk in the higher paths, but to Christians generally will this be found a vast and holy privilege. We meditate on the Sufferings and Death of our Blessed Lord; we call to mind not only the exceeding great love of our Master and only Saviour Jesus Christ thus dying for us, but also those Holy mysteries, which, as pledges of that love, He hath instituted and ordained, for a continual remembrance of His Death to our great and endless comfort. Why, then, should the Sacred Infancy, the Hidden

Life, and the Hidden Sayings of our Blessed Saviour be ever deliberately passed over?

To proceed, therefore. "He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them." These words, beloved, contain nearly all that has been revealed to us of the life of our Divine Redeemer until he was thirty years of age. True, another part of the Gospel narrative justifies the ordinary belief that He followed the trade of His foster-father Joseph; but this additional fact scarcely adds to the knowledge imparted by the text, but only confirms and illustrates it. And here we arrive at the first of those lessons, towards which the spiritual writers of the Church are so apt to point our attention. "He went down with them and came to Nazareth." The home of Mary and Joseph was an obscure home at Nazareth, and in its privacy our Blessed Lord chose to pass so many years of His earthly life. He submitted Himself to His creatures. He became obedient to Mary and Joseph. To them were committed the Childhood, the Boyhood, and the early Youth of the God-Man, and they shared, with unseen adoring Angels, the impenetrable

mysteries and marvellous secrets of His hidden life. But though only little is recorded, yet that little is overflowing with abounding lessons. "He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them."

Two cannot fail to occur to us at once. First, that which is taught by a consideration of His life being hidden from the world; and, secondly, the duty of obedience. Let us, therefore, thus briefly consider them.

I. And here it should be noted at the commencement, that, not only were our Lord's early life and sayings hidden from the world, but also from the Church. One alone was permitted to know them. "His Mother kept all these sayings in Her Heart." Thus would He appear to teach us in His Own Person that which is too often put forth for our acceptance in His Holy Word—that the most important life is the interior,—that which is led apart from men,—that which is a close, and becomes daily a closer, walk with God. It is not difficult simply to hide ourselves from the world, for, with some, it is the mere instinct of their

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nature to be retiring ; or we may be selfish, indolent, or apathetic ; but to hide ourselves from our own friends, in order to forsake home and friends, and relations, for our Lord and Saviour's sake,—this is hard indeed.

But our Blessed Lord's life and sayings were, we said, hidden from the world. St. John, the beloved disciple and Evangelist, alluding, no doubt, only to His public ministry, and to the life He led when working the works of Him that sent Him, declared "that there were also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one" "even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written." Is this fact of our Lord's hidden life—to speak with all reverence—what we should have expected beforehand ? Far otherwise. Surely, then, should we learn more and more, by daily meditating upon such mysteries, that the thoughts of man are not as the thoughts of God, nor our ways as His. Far better for us, where we fail to comprehend, to believe all things, and hope all things, resigning ourselves, our souls, and our bodies,—our every thought, our every desire,—into the Hands of the

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Eternal Wisdom, that so the clay may be moulded as the Potter wills.

Again: this fact teaches us a pointed lesson against the love of publicity, which is so common a failing with too many amongst us. It runs directly counter to all our ordinary notions on the subjects of notoriety, public opinion, and public importance. It tells us that our admiration of the rich and great, and our contempt for the poor and obscure, is not that which Christ Jesus would approve. If these should, unhappily, be our thoughts, a few steps backward will bring us to a state of mind in which hidden prayers, and unseen acts of self-denial, will be regarded as simply thrown away and valueless.

Once more. While the people of the world knew Him not, God was amongst them. He was living with Joseph and Mary in their humble home. "He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them." While the names of the great ones of this world were being bandied about,—while so-called noble deeds and mighty achievements were on the tongues of thousands,—the Redeemer of mankind,—a Child at Nazareth,—was hold-

ing sweet communion with His heavenly Father, and building up His Eternal Church on the foundations of holy and perfect obedience.

II. Here we proceed to the second step, and find that one lesson stands forth for our immediate consideration. “Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice ; and to hearken than the fat of rams.” Here was a lesson of obedience. The Creator of heaven and earth—the Lord of all—was subject unto His Mother and foster-father. Learn we, therefore, to sanctify our ordinary employments, even our most common actions, and our most menial deeds, by recollectedness, by faith, and by prayer. Verily the highest Christian perfection may be attained in the exercise of the lowest and meanest offices, if only we be careful to walk close to God, and embrace Him with the arms of our love.

For obedience is a virtue which instructs us to embrace immediately, and put into execution with diligence, whatever is commanded us, either by God Himself, or by those lawful superiors who receive their authority from Him, and to whom He desires that we should submit ourselves.

The exercise of this particular virtue was that upon which hung the future of our first parents. "The Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Their own happiness or misery, and the happiness and misery of the entire human race, both for time and for eternity, was to be determined by this. We know too well what happened, and we know, likewise, what is written on the point:—"For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of One shall many be made righteous." And that obedience which was commenced, at the period described in the text, was continued throughout our Blessed Lord's public life. "I came not to do Mine Own Will, but the Will of Him that sent Me." "He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death upon the Cross."

Once more, then, let us ever remember this most important lesson. Let us render to God the offering of our own hearts, our wills, our desires, our liberty. Let us al-

ways seek to obey, in humility and patience, and, at last, He will most surely seek us, to bestow His abiding reward.

But other mysteries remain to our contemplation. We read, likewise, in the text, that "His Mother kept all these sayings in Her Heart." As well the broad mystery of the Incarnation, as the message of the heavenly choir, and the words of the Divine Child. What a subject for contemplation,—these sayings of the Holy Child, Who was the Word and Wisdom of God! Did He reveal to Mary the wonders of the creation of the world? Did He speak of the dawn of time, when "all things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made?" Did He describe the splendour and glory of Heaven, which He had renounced when He emptied Himself, and became Man, that we might be once again joined to God? Did He lay bare the mysteries of the Faith which He Himself had come to proclaim? Did He tell of those sorrows which were ever in His sight to Mary, His Mother, Whose own soul should, as holy Simeon declared, be one day pierced by a sword? If, amongst His hidden sayings, there were those in which He dwelt

upon the setting up and success of His Church on earth, were there no words which shadowed forth the sorrowful mysteries of the Garden, and the Last Agony of the darkened hill ?

“Wist ye not that I must be about My Father’s business,” was a retort which, humanly and reverently speaking, seemed to need some explanation. By His hidden sayings, was that explanation ever given ? Mary was His Mother, and loved Him with a Mother’s love. Christ was God, and God is Love. Could He, then, love Her with less than the love of a Son ? What, then, was His Father’s business ? What were those works which He had come to do ? Did His words,—did His heavenly conversation in the early morning with Her who bare Him,—at the sunny noon, when Joseph, the carpenter, plied his trade,—or when the night came on, throw any light on the mysteries of the Catholic Faith ? Did He tell Her He had come to seek and to save those that were lost ? Did He speak of a reconciliation with His Father,—of an atonement,—of a pardon ? Did He declare that He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance ? Was there a parabolic teaching ? Did un-

questionable indications of Divine Power manifest themselves in deeds, at the Nazareth home? Were the Gospel promises shadowed forth, and its future triumph revealed? The rejection of God's chosen people, and the ingathering of the Gentile nations? Ah, who can tell? Who can pierce the veil which hangs before His hidden Life? Who can call back again the beautiful lives of the Holy Family,—the Childhood of Jesus and John,—the tender concern of Joseph,—the more than maternal love and devotion of the Blessed Mother of Jesus? The Church's traditions are uncertain. The sayings are unrecorded. The Word of God is silent. Only Mary knows. "His Mother kept all these sayings in Her Heart."

And here, once again, fresh lessons stand in our path, and present themselves for our consideration. If both His life and sayings are hidden from the world and from the Church, at least enough has been told to make us long for more. This single sentence that is recorded thus becomes dearer and more dear. It is a sentence of few words, but many ideas. It is a sentence which tells us of the union betwixt God and

man. It overflows, as it were, with the charity of Jesus, whose hidden sayings were lovingly whispered to His Mother. It overflows with the Mother's love of Mary, who so naturally treasured these saying in Her Heart. And when we remember that it was through the ever Omnipotent Grace of the Son that the Mother by all generations is called Blessed, surely we may strive to care as She cared, to meditate as She meditated, and to love as She loved. Their hearts were knit together. They were Mother and Son. And this, though She was human, and He Divine. "His Mother kept all these sayings in Her Heart."

And if, with Christ's hidden sayings, we hear not as Mary heard, and do not as Mary did, at least we may remember some of those many recorded words which fell from His Blessed Lips in after years. "Young man, I say unto thee, arise." "Thy sins are forgiven thee; go in peace." "If I be lifted up I will draw all men unto Me." "It is I; be not afraid." "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life." "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." "Lovest thou Me?" "This is My Body." "This is My Blood." "Verily, I say unto thee, to-day

shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." At least, knowing thus much we may strive to do His Will, and learn the lessons He teaches. He taught ever, for He did His Father's Will, from the moment of the Annunciation by Gabriel, until the time when upon the altar of the Cross He bowed His Head, and gave up the ghost. He taught by His hidden life at Nazareth, as well as by His ministry in public, through the cities and towns of Judæa. He called; He pleaded; He spoke words of wisdom; He performed works of mercy; He wrought miracles of power. And, as at Bethlehem and Nazareth, He was patient, obedient, and humble; so, when He bids us take up His Cross and follow Him, does He urge us to sow the seeds of these virtues in our souls. Then, as He vouchsafed to be subject to Mary and Joseph for our sakes, so may we, in our turns, strive in very love to be subject to Him. And, as the mysteries of the Holy Infancy, and the hidden sayings of the Divine Child were known to Mary, so may we treasure in our hearts not only His recorded sayings, but nurture His all-powerful grace. May our lives be hid with Christ in God. And thus at last shall we become members of that

ily; no longer small as at Nazareth, but prising the faithful, the obedient, and loving of every nation and every age, n all go up to the Heavenly Jerusalem, the Feast of fat things; and a brighter phany than ever, becomes the blessed lot he ransomed. Which God Almighty it to each of us, for the sake of His sed and Only-begotten Son Jesus Christ, Redeemer! Amen.

The Second Sunday after Epiphany.**THE MIRACLE IN CANA OF GALILEE.**

“This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His glory; and His disciples believed on Him.”—ST. JOHN ii. 11.

THOUGH for thirty years the life of our Blessed Lord upon earth was hidden from the world and the Church, yet at last He manifested Himself to His chosen people of old. Year after year He remained with Mary and Joseph at Nazareth unknown, save by them,—uncared for and unsought after. His time was not yet come. But when the appointed years had passed by, and when His Father’s business and works had to be wrought in public, then His mission began. He came to redeem and convert a world steeped in sin. Himself should die for our sins, and rise again for our justification. But men—the weak things of this world, should confound the mighty—men should be selected by Him to proclaim His Message, and gather in the outcast and the sinner. On the banks of Tiberias He called

Andrew and Simon Peter from their daily occupation, to make them fishers of men. James and John, Philip and Bartholomew, and others, summoned likewise, to listen to His sayings, and behold the manifestations of His power. Poor, unknown, and ignorant, they were chosen to witness His miracles, and bear testimony to their character in the face of an unbelieving world. The first opportunity, of which our blessed Lord thought fit to avail Himself, was that recorded in the Gospel for the day. No paraphrase could add to the force or explicitness of the Gospel narrative. It reads thus: "And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there: And both Jesus was called, and His disciples, to the marriage. And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto Him, They have no wine. Jesus saith unto Her, Woman, what have I to do with Thee? Mine hour is not yet come. His Mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever He saith unto you, do

And there were set there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece. Jesus saith unto them, Fill the

waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. And He saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it. When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was: (but the servants who drew the water knew;) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom, And said unto him, Every man in the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now. This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His glory; and His disciples believed on Him."

Now let us, in the first instance, consider this marriage festival at which our Blessed Lord was present. He was invited not as a great person, so to speak, but merely as one they knew, as one of the many. Mary also was invited, for the Mother of Jesus was there. He who disdained not to take upon Him the form of a servant, disdained not to be present at the marriage of servants. On this point, our own writer Bede thus remarks:—"His condescension in coming to the marriage, the miracle He wrought there

are, considering them in the letter only, a strong confirmation of the faith. Therein, too, are condemned the errors of Tetian, Marcion, and others, who detract from the honor of marriage. For if the undefiled bed, and the marriage celebrated with due chastity, partook at all of sin, our Lord would never have gone to one. Whereas now, conjugal chastity being good, the continence of widows better, and the perfection of the virgin state best ; to sanction all these degrees, but distinguish the merit of each, He deigned to be born of the pure womb of the Virgin ; was blessed after birth by the prophetic voice of the widow Anna ; and now, invited in manhood to attend the celebration of a marriage, honors that also by the presence of His goodness." O, happy feast, which our Blessed Lord was pleased to dignify and honor with His Presence, and first miracle ! Being Himself the Author and Institutor of marriage, He was pleased to give it a sanction, and—as our Service declares—to adorn and beautify it. And no wonder. For this " honorable estate, instituted of God in the time of man's innocence, signifying unto us the mystical union that is betwixt Christ and His Church,"

reminds us that our Blessed Lord, by His Incarnation, joined together our human nature with His Divine Person. He came to marry Himself to His Church; and by raising Christian matrimony to a high dignity, as well as by His Word and Sacraments, to espouse souls to Himself.

Again: the marriage festival is recorded to have taken place upon the *third* day. "And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee." Here some have seen a mystery. Even thus, the first age of the world, before the giving of the law, was illuminated by the example of the patriarchs; the second, under the law, by the prophets; the third, under grace, by the preaching of the Apostles and Evangelist; for then had the Only-Begotten taken Flesh. "And the Mother of Jesus was there. And both Jesus was called, and His disciples, to the marriage." How happy were the contracting parties; how happy, likewise, both the ruler—of the feast and all present, in inviting Jesus—to the marriage! How miserably unhappy—shall they be who shut God out from themselves, and from their minds, and simply give themselves over to lust! They invite the devil instead of Jesus; and so, no won—

der that many marriages are unhappy, or that modern divorce courts are sought after.

“And when they wanted wine, the Mother of Jesus saith unto Him, They have no wine.” See, then, how in the midst of the feast wine was wanting, to teach us how treacherous and deceitful are all the pleasures of this world, and how frequently they fail us when we expect so much from them ! It is Jesus alone Who can furnish our immortal souls with the True Wine that maketh glad the heart of man. His charity alone can present us with pure delights, which bring with them true joy and peace, and a certain foretaste of Heaven. “They have no wine;” for it was made to fail, in order to give our Lord the opportunity of making better, that so the glory of God in man might be brought out from its hiding place. “But how came it into His Mother’s mind,” asks St. John Chrysostom, “to expect so great a thing from Her Son ?” For He had done no miracles as yet ; as we afterwards read, “This beginning of miracles did Jesus.” His true nature, however, was being revealed by St. John the Baptist, and by His own conversations with His disciples. Moreover, His Miraculous Conception, and

the circumstances of His Birth had, from the very first, given rise to the highest expectations in Her mind. "His Mother kept all these sayings in Her Heart." "On this occasion," remarks Alcuin, the Saxon author, "She represents the Synagogue, which challenges Christ to work a miracle. For it was customary for the Jews to demand them." Our Blessed Lord's reply was—"Woman, what have I to do with Thee?" At first sight, but not afterwards, a strange and unexpected retort. For that He greatly venerated His Blessed Mother is evident from the record of St. Luke, who tells us that He was subject unto His parents. And where parents throw no obstacle in the way of God's commands, it is our plain and undoubted duty to render obedience to them; but should their demands become unreasonable, or should they desire to cut us off from spiritual gifts and privileges, we should never be deceived into compliance. But there is a deeper reason why this answer was given, as St. Augustine tells us in his *Eighth Tractate*. "It was," he writes, "because our Lord, as God, had not a Mother, though, as man, He had; and the miracle He was about to perform was an act

of His Divinity, not of human infirmity. When, therefore, His Mother demanded a miracle, as though not acknowledging a human birth, when about to work so Divine a change, He exclaimed—‘Woman, what have I to do with Thee?’ As if He had said—‘Thou didst not beget that in Me, which makes the miracle—My Divinity. But because thou broughtest forth My infirmity, I will acknowledge thee then, when that very infirmity shall hang upon the Cross.’ And, therefore, He adds—‘Mine hour is not yet come.’” This expression modifies the other, and proves that our Blessed Lord desired to show honour to His Mother, and would not run counter to Her eventually. He would not, in the presence of so many, put Her to shame, especially as She had sent the servants to Him, so that the petition might come from many, and not from Herself. His Mother said unto the servants, “Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it.” And then follows a record of the miracle itself. The water was made wine. It was not a mixture, but a creation. The nature of water had vanished, and the nature and flavour of wine remained. “Our Blessed Lord,” remarks St. Chry-

sostom, “wished the power of His miracles to be seen gradually; and therefore, He did not reveal what He had done Himself, nor did the ruler of the feast call upon the servants to do so (for no credit would have been given to such testimony, concerning a mere man, as our Blessed Saviour was supposed to be), but He called the bridegroom, who was best able to see what was done. Christ, moreover, did not make wine only, but He made the best wine.”

And here let us reverently note the mysteries which,—as certain of the ancient authors maintain,—lie hid under this first miracle at Cana of Galilee. It was necessary that all things should be fulfilled in Christ which were written of Him. Now these Scriptures stand for the water. And Christ made the water wine, when He opened unto them the meaning of these things, and, expounding the Scriptures, wrung from the Jews the testimony—“He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.” When Christ came, the vinous taste of the law had been weakened by the carnal and watery interpretations of the Pharisees. Again, there have been six ages from the foundation of

the world : the first, from Adam to Noah ; the second, from Noah to Abraham ; the third, from Abraham to David ; the fourth, from David to the carrying away into Babylon ; the fifth, from that period to the mission of St. John the Baptist ; the sixth, from St. John the Baptist to the end of the world. Now St. Augustine supposes these six ages, which were the ages of prophecy, to represent the six waterpots. The prophecies were fulfilled, the waterpots were full. The servants of the feast, too, are the doctors of the New Testament, who interpret the Bible to others spiritually ; and the guests are the faithful generally. Christ deferred the preaching of the Gospel until this, the sixth age.

Furthermore : we should not fail to remember, that every ancient author of note applies this miracle to the Holy Eucharist, and sees in it a type of that abiding and adorable mystery of the faith which our Blessed Lord has been so mercifully pleased to institute, for the strengthening and refreshing of our souls. With this wonderful miracle, He continually honors the marriage feasts of His own espousals with our souls, in order to communicate Himself spiritually

to His spouses, and unite them more and more to Himself. And by the means of this communication of Himself to us, He works another no less wonderful change in us, by which, in a manner, He transforms us into Himself. The bodily food we take, day by day, is, by the means of our own natural heat, continually changed into our own flesh and blood ; but this spiritual food—like the fire which transforms all things into itself—is not changed into our substance, but alters and transforms our souls, as it were, into its own nature, to make them one with this Bread of Life—here by grace, hereafter by glory.

Again : this miracle was of such a character, as that it stamped with truth the Divine mission of its Author. Its very result said, “Truly this is the Son of God.” It was a direct manifestation of His power ; for He changed the substance of water into the substance of wine ; and it was a manifestation of His love, likewise ; for, to speak reverently, it was not required. Moreover, it was witnessed by many. It was not performed out of sight, or with a few ; as when He worked His Father’s works, in the company of Peter, James and John : but it was

wrought at a marriage feast, in the presence of the servants and of the guests, in sight of the ruler of the feast, and of the bridegroom.

Thus, then, have we been enabled to consider this wonderful miracle—this Divine manifestation; and in so doing, to learn the lessons which it teaches. Thus doing, we have followed the footsteps of the most learned and saintly of old; not explaining away the Scriptures, nor reducing them to the level of ordinary writings, but giving them our best and most careful consideration;—looking at them from every point of view, and endeavouring to find in every recorded word, and every forcible expression, some mysterious indication of high truths—some important lesson for our acceptance and meditation. May God grant that our labour has not been in vain!

But still a few practical considerations, in regard to the subject, remain for our further consideration.

The first is, the love of Christ Jesus in thus manifesting Himself. Our Blessed Lord, no doubt, desired that the contracting parties in this marriage at Cana of Galilee—who, to all appearance, were allied, both by

blood and virtue, to His Blessed Mother—should be brought to a knowledge of His Truth. He desired their salvation, and so the miracle was wrought. And as it was with those who were present at the marriage at Cana, so it is with us. Our Blessed Saviour loves us likewise. He has loved us with an everlasting love. He loved us first, even when we were aliens. He loved us continually. His love is most generous. His love is most pure. His love is infinite. He desires ever that we should be present at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, and therefore urges us to love Him in return, that so we may gain His love more and more, and finally obtain its reward. What, then, are we doing? Do we love Him? or, if not, do we strive to gain His love? Do all our words and deeds tend towards this end? Is Jesus present with us, by faith, as He was once present in person and in power at the Cana marriage feast? Do we need a change to be effected in our own souls? If so, let us entreat Him to make it. Mary, His Mother, stood by and remarked, of old, that they had no wine. Some of us, it is to be feared, have, at this very moment, no true spiritual life. We are dead in trespasses

and sins. Let us, therefore, entreat Him to change the water of indifference into the wine of love. And though He may not answer our petitions at once, yet will He do so when His hour for working a change has arrived. Thus the water will be turned into wine, and a miracle of grace be effected.

Again : we read in the text that when He “had manifested forth His glory His disciples believed on Him,” and this, from our side of the question, is the chief point of view—the sum and substance of our Blessed Lord’s work. “His disciples believed on Him.” The poor and unlettered, the fishermen of Galilee, and he who sat at the receipt of custom, saw and believed. “Blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed.” Thrice blessed they, who, possessing a faith that works by love, receive and accept the teaching of the Church though unable to comprehend its mysteries and truths ! Thrice blessed they, who, whether it be abstract revelation, or some particular detail, bend the knee and bow the head of their souls, thankfully accepting both from God ! Thrice blessed here, and more than thrice blessed hereafter, shall they be who, while traversing the wilderness of this world,

walk by faith, and not by sight ! If the just shall live by faith, they shall know life eternal, and there possess the enduring reward of faith. " His disciples believed on Him." And shall not we strive to imitate their example ? His mighty works are before us,—the record of His Father's business is preserved in Holy Scripture. The Church, His Spouse, of which He is the Bridegroom, and to which He was wedded when the Divine and human were linked together, is an everliving subject for our faith. " As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you." " I give unto you the keys of the kingdom of Heaven." She lives, She energizes, She labours. Her works are His. And He works by His Blessed Spirit Who guides Her ever and continually. She is a standing miracle of His charity and power. In Her Master's Name and for Her Master's purpose, She daily manifests Herself and works the works of Him that sent Her. She has a mission, a creed, a dogma, sacraments and words of warning ; words of pardon and promises of reward for the world. She is, at the same time, a spiritual enigma, and a witness of sin. In one breath She takes men back to the ages that have been, while in

another She carries them forward to those that are yet to come. She records, amongst others, the wonderful miracle at Cana, and, —speaking in the Name of Him who wrought it,—calls upon man to believe. Her mysteries are always new,—Her powers ever fresh and young. Time writes no wrinkle upon Her forehead, as She bids us tread in the footsteps of our Blessed Lord's first followers, of whom it is written in the words of the text, "His disciples believed on Him."

What, then, is our response when Her summons reaches us: yea, even, what is our response this very day? Are we seeking by faith to participate in that love which was manifested by this first miracle? Do we stand aside and apart from the common crowd, which carps and criticises, or which even scoffs and disbelieves? Have we, this very day, earnestly thanked God for the wonderful Epiphany of His Son, and for the abiding benedictions which that Epiphany procured for an undeserving world? We are called upon to believe, to labour, to produce fruit. We can ever obtain grace and help in time of need. Let us, therefore, if the change has not yet been effected, beg of our Blessed Lord that our hearts may be

changed through His grace, and by the word of His power. May the water of sin be turned into the wine of grace! May love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, mercy,—the blessed fruits of the Spirit,—live, take root, flourish, and abound in our hearts! May we be joined to the Father by the Spirit, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord!

And there shall be a reward at last—a still brighter Epiphany in the world beyond the grave. We may know Christ here by faith: we may take up our cross and follow Him, in patience, in obedience, in humility. We may go on from strength to strength, until we appear before the God of gods in Sion, and then have the fruition of His glorious Godhead.

A glad reward and a brighter Epiphany! In the appointed day there shall be another Marriage Feast, not at Cana in Galilee, but in Jerusalem, the City of God. And the Mother of Jesus shall be there. And both Jesus and His disciples shall be at this Marriage likewise. There the Worker of the miracle of Redemption shall be the Bridegroom as well. His Spouse shall be the Church of the Living God. And the wine

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shall be presented to the Ruler of the Feast, even the redeemed to the Father of Creation. All doubts shall be removed,—all mysteries made clear in that last Epiphany : for it is the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. It shall be a Feast of corn, and wine, and oil, and the mighty cords of God's eternal love shall bind each to all ! May He, Who wrought the first miracle at Cana, give us to sit down at that His Table in Heaven !

The Third Sunday after Epiphany.

THE CLEANSING OF THE LEPER.

“And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped Him, saying, Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean. And Jesus put forth His Hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.”—ST. MATTHEW viii. 2, 3.

THIS simple narrative—which occurs in the Gospel for to-day—contains almost all that is recorded of this remarkable miracle and manifestation of Christ’s power. While the changing of the water into wine took place in the presence of a few—those assembled at the marriage in Cana—this Miracle of the Cleansing of the Leper occurred immediately after our Blessed Saviour’s Sermon on the Mount, as we read, “When He was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him. And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped Him, saying, Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean. And Jesus put forth His Hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.”

Now the subject seems naturally to divide itself into three portions. First, the faith of the leper. Secondly, his cleansing. And thirdly, the lessons which both the one and the other are intended to teach us.

I. The Faith of the Leper. Behold, there came a leper and worshipped Him, saying, Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean. Now, this disease of leprosy,—almost peculiar to the sultry countries of the East,—is one of the most loathsome maladies known. In every country where its evils are experienced, the most stringent regulations exist with regard to the conduct of those who are suffering from it. But these regulations were, by God's command, increased in stringency when His chosen people first took possession of the promised land. The thirteenth chapter of the Book of Leviticus contains the most explicit rules and directions for the guidance of the Jewish priests. Those suspected of concealing the disease were to be sought out and examined. The priest was to determine and give judgment. If the white spots appeared in all their well-known character, he who carried them is a leprous man. He is unclean.

The priest shall pronounce him utterly unclean. His clothes shall be rent; he must remain away from his friends and companions; an outcast, afflicted, and a leper.

No wonder, therefore, after the Discourse of our Blessed Lord on the Mountain of the Beatitudes; no wonder after He had taught men to pray, to fast, and to lay a good foundation for the world to come, that the leper, who had no doubt heard His Sermons, should believe on Him, and seek a manifestation of His power. When the Lord sits on the mount, only the disciples come to Him; because, before He took upon Himself the frailty of our human nature, God was known only in Judæa. But when He came down from the height of His Divinity and took upon Him the weakness of our poor human nature, a great multitude of the nations followed and obeyed. And here is made manifest to those who teach, that their words should be so chosen,—their admonitions so regulated,—that as each man is able to receive, so should they declare the Counsel of God. “For the Doctors ascend the mountain,” as Bishop Haymo writes, “when they show the more excellent precepts to the perfect; and they come down

from the mountain when they exhibit the lesser precepts to the weak." On the mountain, then, our Blessed Lord taught, cured the diseases of men's souls, and healed the sores of their hearts. But when this was done, He came down from the mountain,—from the heavenly heights,—to heal their bodies, and assuage their pains. And, behold, there came a leper. With earnest adoration, and humble worship, he cried out, " Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean." He did not ask it of Christ as of a human physician, but, adoring Him, sought it as of God. Faith and confession make a perfect prayer, so that the leper, by worshipping, fulfilled the work of faith when he cried out in these words. His prayer seemed to say, " Thy Will alone, O Lord, is the work ; and all works are subject to Thy Will. Thou of old, by the hand of Elisha, didst cleanse the Syrian leper, and now, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean." He did not say, If Thou wilt ask of God, but If Thou wilt. Nor did he say, Lord cleanse me ; but he left all to Christ, thereby making Him Lord, and attributing to Him power over all. If Thou wilt. There can be no doubt that Christ's Will is

ready for every good work. The only doubt was, whether a cleansing of his leprosy would have been expedient for the spiritual advantage of the leper. And so he said in faith, If Thou wilt.

Thus, then, we perceive how firm and fervent was the faith of the leper. He believed, and his faith was manifested both by what he did, as well as by what he said. The Sermons of our Blessed Lord had converted him. The Divine Wisdom of the Word had wrought a change. He believed that Christ was God,—that the Shiloh had come,—that the promised Prophet was then amongst them. With a strong and lively faith, and with a profound humility, this miserable leper presented himself before our Blessed Saviour, crying out, “ Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean.” He sought the true Physician of the soul, Who proved to be, likewise, a Physician of the body. He was poor, and had no money to offer. But Christ was gained simply by prayer. Come and buy wine and milk without money and without price. We cannot offer to God two more acceptable gifts than a lively faith and a hearty prayer. And so it turned out in this case, for we read as follows,

that "Jesus put forth His Hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately the leprosy was cleansed."

II. This brings us to the second part of our subject,—the Cleansing of the Leper.

Our Blessed Saviour, witnessing the exhibited faith, at once heard and answered the prayer. "He was," as St. Chrysostom writes, "able to cleanse at a word, or even by mere will, but He put out His Hand,—He put forth His Hand, and touched him,"—to show that He was not subject to the Law, and that to the pure nothing is impure. Elisha truly kept the Law in all strictness, and did not go out to touch Naaman, but sends him to wash in Jordan. But the Lord shows that He does not heal as a servant, but as Lord heals and touches. His Hand was not made unclean by the leprosy, but the leprous body was made pure by the Holy Hand. For He came not only to heal bodies, but to lead the soul to the True Wisdom. As then He did not forbid to eat with unwashen hands, so here He teaches us that it is the leprosy of the soul we ought only to dread, which is sin; but that the leprosy of the body is no

impediment to virtue." Our Blessed Lord was not polluted by touching the leprosy, but cleansed the leper by touching him. For He was not only God, but Man also. Wherefore, by word and by touch, were Divine miracles wrought. If Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean. The Will was for the sake of the leper. The words "I will ; be thou clean," for the sake of those who stood by. He was not slow in believing ; therefore came the reward of faith at once. His faith was neither weak nor uncertain ; therefore was he cleansed immediately.

Then, furthermore, we read that " Jesus saith unto him, See thou tell no man ; but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them." And this was no doubt said to teach us a lesson,—to lead us to avoid all vain-glory and ostentation in performing good works. Moreover, our Lord directed the cleansed leper to comply with the requirements of the Law, because, until the perfect Sacrifice should be completed, the words " It is finished" be uttered, and the veil of the Temple be rent, the Old Dispensation still had an existence. Go, shew.

thyself to the priest. This was the command of the Levitical Law. There were also divers washings and purifications. A burnt offering and a sin offering were likewise to be made. Each and all types and figures of that One True Sacrifice of Christ upon the Cross, which should remove the leprosy of sin. Go, shew thyself to the priest,—to signify that His gracious Words, spoken for the Apostles, “Whose sins Thou dost forgive they are forgiven, and whose sins Thou dost retain they are retained,” are words of reality and life. For the priests of the New Dispensation, obeying the command, and following humbly and at a distance in the Footsteps of their Master, are commissioned to bind up the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captive, forgiveness of sins to the penitent, and a cleansing to the spiritual leper. Nay, more; for the Church thus bids them say, “By His authority, committed to me, I absolve thee from all thy sins, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.”

III. We now come to the third and practical part, and that which specially con-

cerns ourselves, viz.—The lessons which both the faith of the leper and his cleansing by our Blessed Lord are intended to teach us.

Sin, unlike leprosy, is not confined either to any age or any country. Its dominion is well-nigh universal. The disease which afflicted our first parents has increased in virulence and intensity, and shall afflict mankind until the end. Pride and covetousness,—by which Paradise was lost,—still own their willing votaries and victims. Anger, intemperance, envy and sloth, still do their work. Theft, murder and adultery are as rife as ever. The spiritual leprosy afflicts the entire human race. The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. “Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His Face from you that He will not hear. For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity. Your lips have spoken lies. Your tongue hath muttered perverseness. None calleth for justice, nor any pleadeth for truth. They trust in vanity, and speak lies; they conceive mischief, and bring forth iniquity.” And what is true of the world in general is equally true of nations and individuals likewise. The

wheel within wheel of sin revolves continually. The entire social economy is tainted with evil. Every plan, every scheme, every failure, every success supply food upon which sin may exist. The young and the old of every class and station, in word or deed, in mind or intent, run counter to the Will of God. They feed the fires of lust. They double the cheat or deception. They mystify the deliberate falsehood. City and village, town and hamlet, man and woman, stripling and child, continue ever to offend with deliberation their Saviour and their God. Alone and away from the sight of men, or in bold defiance of the world's moral standard, they sin yet again and again. And evil example helps forward the spread of evil. For sin is infectious. The soul that was cleansed in the Living Waters of Christ is once again tainted by temptation, or blackened by a first reluctant consent, only still later to drive out the Spirit of Mercy, and accept the sovereignty of the evil one.

Let us look at our own country, at our own neighbourhood, at our own place of residence, yea, even into our own hearts; for this last is our first duty. Then shall we

know in what way the leprosy of sin increases; then, with Death and Judgment, Heaven and Hell before our eyes, shall we seek for that pardon which we need and desire. We shall hear the Words of the Almighty,—the gracious promise which He ever sets forth, —“ God willeth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should be converted and live.” We shall seek His Feet Who has come down from the lofty mountain of His Majesty and Power, confident that those who seek in earnestness will find in certainty. We shall feel the burden of our sins, the wretchedness of our state, and, above all, the anger of an offended God. We shall experience an alienation from all that is fair and good, from all that is beautiful and lovely. And so, with the leper of old, shall we cry out, “ Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean.”

Let us, therefore, seek, and we shall find. Let us knock, and it shall be opened unto us. Let us learn at once that repentance is the plank after shipwreck, and that confession ever precedes forgiveness. We have already considered both the necessity of repentance, the time of repentance, its mode and its reward. Be our knowledge,

then, of some practical avail. Before we go in faith, as did the leper, we must have realized the fact that we are dead in trespasses and sins,—that we are, in fact, spiritual lepers. All our manifold transgressions, and more especially our besetting sin, should be pondered upon and forsaken ; for this latter, as an eminent living Doctor remarks, lies most likely at the root of other faults, and therefore needs to be destroyed. “ It burrows under ground, as it were, and comes up at a distance, where we look not for it. It branches out into other faults ; twines round and kills some grace ; hides itself behind other faults or virtues ; puts itself forth in the midst of them. It colours every other fault ; it interferes with, or overshadows or overlays every grace. But the more this one fault spreads, the more, if you uproot it, you will clear off the field of your conscience ; the more will your heart become the good ground, which, freed from thorns, shall bear fruit, thirty, sixty, an hundred-fold, to life everlasting.”

Let this be destroyed, therefore, or, at least, let a firm resolution be made that its destruction shall be commenced at once, and then we may hope to gain that which the

leper obtained. Then we may cry out with him, "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean." And if we be faithful and patient, we may hope, sooner or later, for the same gracious reply. If Thou wilt. Now we know that our Blessed Lord does will our salvation. For He came down from Heaven, to be made Man in time, that we might be joined to Himself, God, for eternity. He was made flesh, He was circumcised, He manifested Himself to the shepherds and to the Wise Men. He suffered, died, and was buried, for our sins. He rose again for our justification. He came, moreover, to give us, in Himself, a pattern of every virtue. In all He did and said, in every miracle He wrought, and in every parable He put forth, He manifested forth His glory and His love, evidencing His desire for our salvation. So that there can be no doubt of the answer He will give, if we only go to Him in faith, nothing doubting. We must not waver, we must not hesitate, we must not delay. When He comes down from the mountain of His splendour,—when He vouchsafes to be present in the Sacrament of Holy Communion,—we must diligently seek Him out.

and, like the leper, we must worship Him with profound adoration, saying, "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean." He is thus with us still; not in His natural Body; but still He is amongst us: as He promised of old, "Lo, I am with you always; even unto the end of the world." And His Powers still exist and energize in the Church. The stewards of His Mysteries bid to repentance. So the desolate may be comforted, the poor may be made rich in Christ, the ignorant instructed, the feeble may be strengthened, the leper may be cleansed. "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean."

And who can doubt of either the sign or the answer? This is the sign: "He put forth His Hand, and touched him." And this is the answer: "I will; be thou clean." O Blessed Lord Jesus, may it be given us to touch Thee with the hand of faith. May we be found amongst that blessed company, of whom it was said, Blessed are they who have not seen and yet have believed. Lord, may we seek Thee and find. May we come to Thy Feet, and, having come, may we hear Thy gracious Voice. Here are the transgressions of a lifetime. Here are the

continually-repeated faults of youth, of manhood, and of old age. Here are our souls, festering with the corruption of sin, and black with the stains of iniquity. Create in us a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within us. Let us feel the touch and pressure of Thy piercèd Hand. Let us hear Thy gracious Words, Thy loving Voice, Thy kindly Message: "I will; be thou clean."

Then what followed of old shall likewise now ensue. "Immediately his leprosy was cleansed." Sin shall no longer have dominion over us; the world and its pleasures shall no longer delight us, and we shall be continually preparing for a world which is to come. Our daily lives will become more and more conformable to His Most Holy Will, and we shall have obtained a foretaste of the blessed and eternal promises of Christ Jesus.

Finally, then, in reference to the words of our Blessed Saviour, which occur immediately after the text—"See thou tell no man; but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them." Of this, writes the Venerable Bede, when

treating the Gospel for to-day, "Should any be perplexed how, when the Lord seems here to approve Moses' offering, the Church does not receive it, let him remember that Christ had not then rendered up His Body as an offering. And it behoved that the typical sacrifices should not be taken away before that which they typified was established by the preaching of the Apostles, and by the faith of the people to whom they preached. By this man was figured the whole human race ; for he was not only leprous, but is described in the Gospel according to St. Luke as full of leprosy. For all have sinned, and require that the Hand of the Saviour,—that is, of the Word made Flesh,—being stretched out, and touching human nature, they might be cleansed from the vanity of their former ways, and that those who had been long abominable, and, like the lepers, cast out from the camp of God's people, might once again be restored to the temple and the priest, and be able to present their bodies a living sacrifice to Him to Whom it was said, 'Thou art a Priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedeck.'"

To the same effect, speaks the Church of England, in one of the exhortations in the

Communion Service:—"And because it is requisite that no man should come to the Holy Communion but with a full trust in God's mercy, and with a quiet conscience, therefore, if there be any of you who, by this means, cannot quiet his own conscience herein, but requireth further comfort or counsel, let him come to me, or to some other discreet and learned minister of God's Word, and open his grief, that by the ministry of God's Holy Word, he may receive the benefit of absolution, together with ghostly counsel and advice, to the quieting of his conscience, and avoiding of all scruple and doubtfulness."

Here, then, is our duty marked out. This is the way in which we should walk. And while we take our journey onwards, should we offer to God the gift which our Blessed Lord commanded,—a heart inflamed with Divine charity.

Thus, then, by God's blessing, have we considered this wonderful miracle, by which our Saviour Christ manifested forth His glory and love; and we have heard some of those lessons which it teaches. Our ears at least have taken in the Gospel Message. May our hearts be renewed by its graces!

If the taint return again, or the leprosy break out anew, Christ still remains the great Physician of souls; therefore, let us neither faint nor despond. Only believe we, and act. Our foes may be many; our sorrows may be deep; our joys may be few. It may be dark. It may be night. But though heaviness may endure for a night, joy cometh in the morning. Lord, Thou canst make us clean. So shall our heaviness issue in prayer, deep and earnest. So shall faith pierce the blackest gloom. Angels shall bear upon their golden wings the hearty petitions of the faithful; and, like the breath of incense, shall they ascend to the Presence of the Father. There, the Intercessor shall plead and present. From thence shall the Blessed Spirit's graces descend more and more abundantly. And souls purchased by Christ on Calvary shall experience a brighter and brighter Epiphany until they behold Him in glory, and share that glory with Him for ever and ever. Which God Almighty grant to each and all of us, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

The Fourth Sunday after Epiphany.

THE TEMPEST STILLED.

“And when He was entered into a ship, His disciples followed Him. And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but He was asleep. And His disciples came to Him, and awoke Him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish. And He saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then He arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm. But the men marvelled, saying, What manner of Man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?”—*ST. MATTHEW* viii. 23—27.

THE Gospel of to-day,—from which these words are taken,—contains still further records of the manifestation of our Blessed Lord and Saviour, and the most striking of these is that related in the words of the text. On former occasions He had wrought great miracles and wonders upon land. He had turned the water into wine, and had cleansed the leper; but now he passes on to the sea, so that there, also, He might show forth His powers, and prove Himself to be both the Lord of earth and sea. Therefore He stills a tempest.

When He was entered into a ship, His disciples followed Him. They followed Him, not being weak but strong,—rooted and grounded in the Faith. They followed Him, not so much treading in His Footsteps, as accompanying Him in holiness of spirit. They followed Him in implicit confidence. “He took His disciples with Him,” writes St. Chrysostom, “and in a boat, that they might learn two lessons:—first, not to be confounded in dangers; and, secondly, to think lowly of themselves in honor. And that they should not be puffed up with pride, because they were suffered to remain with Him, He permits them to be tossed by the waves. Where miracles were to be shewn, He suffers the people to be present; where temptations and fears were to be stilled, there He takes with Him only those who should be the conquerors of the world, whom He desires to prepare for the conflict.”

Having entered the boat, and drifted away from the land, He causes the waves to rise. “And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves.” Now, this tempest did not rise of itself, but in obe-

dience to His command, Who created both the earth, the sea, and the sky, and Who could both raise and lull a tempest. They that go down to the sea in ships and occupy their business in the great waters; these men see the works of the Lord, and His wonders in the deep. For at His Word the stormy wind ariseth: which lifteth up the waves thereof. And again, He maketh the storm to cease, so that the waves thereof are still. Furthermore, this tempest arose, in order that the power of Christ Jesus might be manifested. But as yet no command went forth, no power was exercised, for He was asleep. The disciples who were with Him had seen others made partakers of His gifts and graces. For example: the centurion's servant, lying at home grievously sick of the palsy, had been healed; and St. Peter's wife's mother, likewise, had been cured of a fever. But none of us entertain so lively a sense of those mercies which may be made manifest in the bodies and souls of our neighbours, as of the works which are wrought for our own advantage: and so obviously it was with the Apostles themselves. Therefore, He willed that this tempest should arise, in order that they

might experience His mercies, and that in their deliverance by Him they might have a more lively sense of His goodness. And this period of terror was upon them when the storm was at its height; when, as we read, He was asleep. Now, if this tempest had arisen when He was awake, it is not impossible that the disciples either would not have been fearful; would not have cried out to Him in prayer, "Lord, save us;" or would not have believed that He had the power to still it. Therefore, He was asleep. O stupendous and wonderful event! He that neither slumbereth nor sleepeth, He,—Whose Eye never tires, Whose glance takes in Past, Present, and Future, in the tithe of a moment; Who reads the hearts of each of us, and without Whose permission not a sparrow falls to the ground,—was asleep. He slept with His Body, but was awake in His Deity; thus proving that He was really and truly Man. He slept with His Body, that He might compel the wakeful Apostles to watch, and to teach His followers that they should never sleep in their minds. There arose a great tempest in the sea. But He was asleep. And His

disciples came to Him, and awoke Him, saying, "Lord, save us : we perish."

These disciples, though they had seen the miracles of our Blessed Lord, and had Him with them in the ship, yet were afraid and feared the danger. Life Eternal was amongst them, and yet they feared death. In the Faith they were but children, or even babes, weak and trembling ; therefore timid and affrighted, they cry out, " Lord, save us : we perish."

Our Blessed Lord's answer stands thus : " Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith ?" as if He had said, Ye have known the powerful upon earth ; why doubt ye, then, that I am equally powerful on the sea ? They, in all probability, fully believed that when He was awake, He could rebuke the waves and still the tempest ; but they seemed to doubt whether He could do it sleeping. However, the narrative informs us, that the storm was raging, the waves ran high. There was darkness above. There were dangers around. The disciples' hearts failed them for fear when the waves were splintered, and the gloom was deepest. But Christ was in the ship. He was Omnipotent.

tent, because He is God. Then "He arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm." Conscious of its Creator, the waves ceased to swell, and all was still. Christ gave commandment to the winds and to the sea, and the mighty storm became a great calm. It became Him Who is great to do great things. He stirred the depths of the sea, and the disciples were grievously troubled. He levelled the waves of Gennesareth, that they might know great rejoicing. "Mark likewise," says St. Chrysostom, "that the storm is stilled at once and altogether. No trace of the disturbance remains. All of which is beyond nature; for when a storm ceases in the ordinary course of things, the water is agitated for some time longer. But here at once is tranquillity. Thus what is said of the Father—'He maketh the storm to cease,'—was actually fulfilled by the Son. He spake the word, and the tempest became a great calm." "But the men marvelled, saying, What manner of Man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him." What manner of Man is this? His sleeping and His appearance indicated the Man,—the sea and the calm pointed out the God.

What manner of Man is this?—how powerful! how mighty! how great! He commands every creature, and they transgress not His Law. Man alone is disobedient, and is condemned by His Judgment. Again: Even the winds and the sea obey Him. Learn we from this to seek out His Will, and strive to follow in His Foot-steps. Learn we to be patient and faithful, humble and obedient, and no tempest shall hurt.

Thus, then, have we briefly considered this fresh act in Christ's Epiphany. And, at the same time, have we learnt certain lessons taught by the narrative. But others,—and these most important,—remain behind. As well for the Church Universal as for individual souls, is the narrative of this Miracle pregnant with deep and important lessons.

1. First, as regards the Church. Let us consider the teaching of the miracle in reference to Her from the day of Pentecost,—from the time that the Ark of Christ's Church was first launched on the waves of this troublesome world. Storms and tempests have been Her lot. Persecutions,—first by the Jews, then by the Gentiles, fearful,

bloody, universal,—wrought successfully the work of the devil. The world, ever against Her, rose up in power and fury to cast out those who witnessed against its apostacy and sins. On all sides there were foes. In every nation a desire for their blood. As well through the governor of some distant and petty province, as by the command of the emperor himself, did the Romans of old attempt the overthrow of the Church of God. The fire and the wild beasts; the sword, the wheel and the halter, wrought a savage and cruel work. Too often was it true that there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves. Too often the prayers were unsaid, and the Oblation unoffered, even in the dens and caverns of the desert. Fears abounded; sorrows were deep; tribulations were many and grievous. The storm seemed too furious to be withstood,—the destruction too universal to be avoided. The surges rose; the skies were black; and the ship was in a great strait. Yet, for all this, the Captain of the vessel was amongst them. Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. They but judged Him to be asleep. Therefore, when

the fury of the foe raged wildest, when their sorrows deepened, when the faint-hearted went backwards, and the saintliest were called to their rest, the disciples awoke Him, and cried out, "Lord, save us: we perish." They could not wait. Their faith was failing. They tried to hope against hope. They dared not delay the call. The cords were as yet unstrengthened. The stakes unenlarged. They were everywhere spoken against. They were persecuted even unto death. There were but few remaining, and so their cry went up. And this was the answer: "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?" Why do ye fail to trust in Him Whose promise can never fail, and Whose powers are as many as ever? The axe and the torture made salvation more secure; and their way of sorrows was the road to God. He, the Captain of their salvation, had suffered before. He had ridden alone on the stormy sea when His disciples forsook him and fled,—when He endured His Passion and Cross,—and should not they be prepared to suffer likewise? Heed not the cruelty of the Pagan, or the malice of the foe. "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?" Soon Christ came. Of old

He came in poverty and weakness, but then in riches and might. Severe persecutions were endured in patience, till a cry from the desolate Christians, piercing the clouds round His Footstool, reached His Sacred Heart, and then He heard and answered their prayer. He made the storm to cease. He arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea ; and there was a great calm.

2. Heresies, too, caused storms to arise,—violent and dangerous,—which continually disturbed the peace of the Church, and marred Her security and work. In early ages the doctrine of the Incarnation of our Blessed Saviour was ever being assailed on all sides. Even before the death of the Apostles, while the Gnostics propagated their pernicious errors, the Ebionites and Cerinthians taught that Christ Jesus was a mere man. Later still, Arius maintained a similar blasphemy, and Eutyches and Nestorius, selecting other and opposite points for attack, attempted still further to mar the progress of the Church. Too often was the sky black. Too frequently were the efforts of the sinful crowned with success. At first there might have been seen a cloud no bigger than a man's hand ; but too often it

grew as it went on, overspreading the sky, and obscuring the light of the Sun. There were tumults of contradictory voices, and the conflicting powers of opposing wills. The very helmsmen of the Church's ship mutinied, desiring that She should drift, hither and thither, in uncertainty, without chart and without guide. And, hour by hour, the storm raged louder, and the winds rose high. There lacked an unity of purpose, and a singleness of heart. Every man bowed down before the conceits of his own mind, or even led others astray with care and deliberation. And so the storm increased. He Who had promised His Presence until the end of the world was still there : but He was asleep, and to some He seemed to be altogether absent. Therefore, when the floods had risen ; when the floods had lifted up their voice ; when the waves of the sea were mighty and raged horribly ; then was the prayer made ; then was the petition sent up, and the wailing cry of the faithful heard, " Lord, save us : we perish." The teachers appeared to have been removed into a corner once again. There was no King in Israel. The ship of the Church seemed to be in danger, and made no progress.

Breakers were near. Fears abounded. Therefore the earnest petition, "Lord, save us : we perish."

And this was heard and answered, when, from time to time, error was condemned and the Truth re-affirmed. Antioch and Nicæa, Ephesus and Constantinople,—where, under the guidance of the Blessed Spirit of God, the united Episcopate, was gathered together to speak in the Name of Christ,—were bright spots, where a gracious and welcome response was vouchsafed. There were tempests stilled. There He said unto them, "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then He arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm."

3. Divisions, or schisms likewise, have given rise to manifold evils. They, too, have created storms. Originally, the Church of God was one. One visibly, one in aim, one in heart, one by sacraments, one by government, one with Christ, Who was also One with God. Like Her visible organization, She possessed a visible Unity. But, here likewise, storms were known. "Behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with

the waves : but He was asleep." There was a grievous storm when the East was separated from the West, and a mighty tempest, some centuries later, when the West was still further subdivided. In every country and in every age such evils have unhappily existed, and the goodly ship of the Church has suffered severely through the misunderstandings and dissensions of Her crew. Now, day by day, prayers are ascending that our Blessed Saviour's dying petition—that we may all be one with Him as He is with the Father—may, in God's good time, be answered. Men are daily more and more experiencing the evils and miseries of our unhappy divisions. So, as in the Gospel, they cry out, "Lord, save us : we perish." And when it may please Him to awake out of His slumber, and quell the storm, we know not : but one day there shall be oneness again. He shall rebuke the winds and the sea, and there shall be a great calm. Then are they glad because they are at rest, and so He bringeth them unto the haven where they would be. O that men would, therefore, praise the Lord for His goodness, and declare the wonders that He doeth unto the children of men !

4. And what was true of the Church in general is equally true of individuals in particular. The experience of every soul would testify to the accuracy of this. It is not all easy sailing on the ocean of life. The waves are not always bright and silvery, nor is the way at all times straight and plain. The voyage is one of danger and difficulty. Too frequently do we drift towards unkindly shores. We start well, in the morning of life, when all is fair and promising; but soon we lose our way, soon we fail in our duties, and find that a tempest is upon us. There are storms around and about, there are tumults within. For too often does the light seem to have gone out in our souls, and a horrible dread overwhelms us. Sin and the world have done their utmost to ruin us, and we have well-nigh made shipwreck of our faith. But we would fain escape from the dreadful tempest which has come upon us, for the waves lash angrily, and the storm is at its worst. To whom, then, shall we look for help? To whom shall we flee for succour? He Who stilled the tempest of old is even now with us in the ship though He appears to be asleep. To Him, therefore, do we put up

our cry of desolation and fear—" Lord, save us : we perish."

In every trial and temptation ; in every disappointment and sorrow, when the world, the flesh and the devil are against us ; when the tempests of sin are round about us, and the storms of our own angry passions are within us, then should we cry out for help. It may be that we are not even now in the ship. It may be that by distinct and wilful sin we have deliberately thrown ourselves overboard, and where the waves are most furious and the storm most blinding, struggling to escape eternal death. It may be that in this plight we yet remember the gracious mercy of God, and by repentance—the plank after shipwreck—resolve to seek Him again. It may be that even here such present dangers remind us forcibly of the long-suffering and goodness of the Master of the vessel. So, remembering His past mercies, shall we feel confident that our petition will be heard, and that He will not close His ears to any earnest or hearty prayer. No sins shut us out from Him if they be repented of ; for He desireth not the death of a sinner. Therefore in faith and confidence let the prayer be heard—" Lord, save us : we perish."

And the same record shall be known by experience:—“Then He arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm.”

O blessed rest after so many years of sinful unquiet! O enduring peace which the world cannot give, but which Christ so graciously imparts! O joyous return in penitence, sorrow and amendment to the Ark of Christ's Church, there to be fed, and nourished, and cared for, and loved tenderly as ever!

Are ye tempest-tossed, then, beloved in the faith? Has yours been a time of sorrow, a day of darkness, a life for the present world and not a life for the world to come? If so, there have been many tempests, and ye must have felt your need of His Presence. Therefore, seek Him now. Therefore, seek Him earnestly. Seek Him in repentance and faith; with honesty of purpose and determination of will. Fear not the tempest. Fear not the lengthened voyage. Fear not the wave or the surge. Only seek Him in faith and seek Him at once. “Seek ye the Lord while He may be found. Call ye upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake His way, and the unrighteous man his

thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, for He will have mercy, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." Christ Jesus will answer your prayer. He will arise to rebuke the winds and the sea, so that there shall be a great calm.

Two considerations of a practical nature seem to flow naturally from our present subject. The first is, the value of faith; the second, the efficacy of prayer. Let each, in conclusion, have a brief consideration.

I. The value of faith. And, first, let us remember what faith is not. It is not, as some vainly and wrongly imagine, a presumptuous confidence of the remission of our sins,—of our present justification and future glory: excluding altogether that fear and trembling with which we are told it is ever needful to work out our salvation; but it is a ready and ardent belief of all those doctrines which God has been pleased to reveal. It is a close adhesion of the soul to every divine truth imparted by the Truth Itself. It is, as St. Paul teaches us, the substance of things hoped for; the evidence of things not seen. It pulls down the pride of man by leading captive his understanding, com-

PELLING him to believe what he cannot see, and to adore what he cannot comprehend. Moreover, faith to be acceptable to God, must be universal ; that is, it must take in all the revealed truths which He has been pleased to impart. It must exhibit itself, as did the faith of the Apostles, by a living belief in His power, Who, though partaking of our nature, is, at the same time, Lord of lords. In dangers and temptations, in darkness and storms, those who possess it, will cry out, " Lord, save us : we perish."

II. Then as to prayer. Prayer is the life of the soul. It is a conversation with God. It is a raising up of the heart and mind to Him who justly looks for our homage and adoration ; for our thanksgiving and praise. Prayer gives free access to the Presence of God's Majesty. There, then, may we seek Him. He will never be wearied of our importunity ; nor will He tire of listening to our petitions. The door of His sanctuary will ever stand open, and the casket of His treasures be within the reach of all.

O, then, may we ever delight in prayer !
May we thus hold sweet communion with

our Maker and Redeemer! In weariness, in painfulness, in sorrow, in desolation, when a spiritual drought afflicts us; when temptations assail, when the skies are dark and the tempest is furious; then will prayer avail. This the Apostles, to their infinite joy, discovered when there arose a great tempest in the sea. They cried out in their fear and loneliness—a hearty, earnest prayer—“Lord, save us: we perish.” “Then He arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm.”

One word more. In every trial and want, under every affliction and pain; in weakness and woe; in lone-heartedness and destitution; when the waters well-nigh drown us, and when the stream almost goes over our soul, let us look to Him Who made and rules all things. Though He may seem to slumber, yet is He watchful ever. Though He may withdraw Himself for a season, to teach us to place all our hope and dependence on Him,—though He may leave us for awhile to let us buffet with the surge and the wind; yet will He speak at last, and allay the fury of the storm. The Ark of the Church shall ever ride secure, for the

tempests of this world have no power to destroy. She rides the storm triumphantly: She bears a goodly company. Saved, like Noah of old from the general destruction, they wait for the haven of rest. Though around, about and above there be blackness and darkness, yet can faith catch a glimpse of a sure and certain anchorage, and a safe and everlasting rest. It is the fair haven of Heaven. It is the region where no storms come. Thitherward moves the Church's ship. Thitherward are the eyes of the faithful anxiously turned. Soon the rude waves shall give place to the gentle ripple. Soon the darkness of the tempest to the glorious light of Heaven. There shall be a great calm. And there shall be likewise a song of thanksgiving—which God grant to all of us to sing!—"We found trouble and heaviness: we were even at death's door. The waters of the sea had well-nigh overwhelmed us. The stormy wind lifted up the waves. Our soul melted away because of trouble. We cried unto Thee, and Thou deliveredst us out of our distress. Blessed, therefore, be the Lord God, even the God of Israel, Who only doeth wondrous things:

and blessed be the Name of His Majesty for ever. And let all the people say, Amen.”

May He Who, by stilling the Tempest, manifested forth His glory, give us grace, so to make our voyage secure ; that, trusting in Him, we may finally reach the harbour of eternal repose, and enjoy that more blessed and brighter Epiphany which shall be the reward of the ransomed, in the world beyond the grave ! Amen, and Amen.

The Fifth Sunday after Epiphany.

THE WHEAT AND THE TARES.

“Let both grow together until the harvest; and in the time of harvest I will say unto the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into My barn.”—ST. MATTHEW xiii. 30.

HERE in this parable,—which the Church appoints as the proper Gospel for to-day,—we gain a fresh Epiphany from the Lips of our Blessed Lord Himself. He reveals to us something definite concerning the future, and tells us what shall come to pass at the end of the world. Here is no mere speculative theory but a practical fact,—a fact which concerns us all, and as true as that He shall come to judge both the quick and the dead at the end of the world.

“The kingdom of Heaven,” we read, “is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field. But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth

fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came, and said unto him ; Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field ? From whence, then, hath it tares ? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou, then, that we go and gather them up ? But he said, Nay ; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up the wheat with them.” And then follow the words of the text : “ Let both grow together until the harvest ; and in the time of harvest I will say unto the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them : but gather the wheat into My barn.”

Let us, then, by God’s grace, so consider these words, and learn the lesson which this parable teaches,—that so we may not only bear in mind the particular manifestation which is here so graciously vouchsafed ; but may at last,—by patient continuance in well-doing,—be found amongst the wheat, at the great ingathering in the end : and thus avoid the eternal punishment so justly due to sin.

The kingdom of Heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field.

Here we behold the infinite riches and goodness of the Son of God, both God and Man, Who,—without respect of persons,—scatters so plentifully the seeds of His grace, on every kind of soil. This good seed is heavenly, and it is capable of producing much and abundant fruit. Christ, the God-Man, being the Sower, and His field being the world, which He created,—“all things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made,”—He Himself waters with rain from Heaven the seed thus scattered, and looks in due time for the production of wheat for the barn.

But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. Here we learn, as the course of events too plainly testifies, that error arose after truth. False prophets came after the true Prophets, false apostles after the Apostles of our Blessed Lord, Antichrist after Christ. For unless the enemy of souls perceives somewhat to imitate, and some to lay in wait for, he does not make any attempt. And so, when he saw that, here one, and there another, brought forth fruit, some thirty, some sixty, and some an hundred-fold ; and

discovered that he was unable to choke that which had so firmly taken root and was so flourishing, he adopts a practice more insidious, more artful, more deadly—"While men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way." Again: "While men slept." While the teachers from God—those who had received our Blessed Lord's especial commission—were supine and careless; after the Apostles had been called from labour to rest, from earth to Heaven, then came the enemy and sowed tares. "We do well," writes an ancient author, "to discover whether by such are signified hereticks, or Catholic Christians who lead evil lives. When it is said that they were sown among the wheat, such a statement may be supposed to indicate that they were all of one communion. But forasmuch as our Blessed Lord evidently interprets the field to mean, not the Church, but the world, we may well understand it of hereticks and unbelievers, who in this world are so frequently mixed up with the faithful and the holy." "While men slept." When all appeared secure; when the path seemed straight and the journey easy; when the best thoughts and energies of men were

asleep, — then came the mischief. Low morals, loose behaviour, false doctrine, schism and profitless speculation invited the Evil One. Christ had gone before, sowing the good seed,—scattering a knowledge of Himself, of His Eternal Father, of the Blessed Spirit; and teaching mankind the wonderful mysteries of the Christian religion, and the blessed promises of everlasting life. And then came the foe. Our Lord sowed the good seed, but too many were indifferent in receiving it; and so was there room made for the tares. The words of Christ were too frequently neglected, perverted or forgotten: and the vain and groundless promises of Satan thus readily accepted. “While men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat.”

“But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also.” Thus we see that, in many instances, the seed sown by our Blessed Saviour, not only sprung up, but brought forth fruit. His teaching, His words of wisdom, His wonderful miracles, His deeds of charity and works of mercy first broke the ground of man’s heart, and then His all-powerful

and abiding grace did its certain work. First, man was led to repentance, and thus he gained the gift of faith. Then, the seed, watered by the tears of sorrow, and sunned by Divine light, sprung up, put forth its blade, and brought forth fruit. There were, anciently, mighty deeds of faith and striking acts of self-denial. Men longed to follow Christ, to suffer, to bear reproaches, to meet persecution, contumely, death. They believed, and, therefore, their light shone before men; and men, seeing their good works, glorified their Father Who is in Heaven. Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, patience, obedience and humility shone in the hearts and lives of the faithful. They fought a good fight, they finished their course, they kept the faith. They sought ever after the Pearl of Great Price; they went out seeking the one thing needful—even the giving up of their entire wills to Almighty God,—and having sought they found. Though they might have been despised here—like their Master and Lord, Who was a Man of Sorrow and acquainted with grief,—yet they counted the praise of this world but as dung, if so be they might attain to the promises. They were the Elect

of God, precious,—Saints and Confessors, Martyrs and Preachers of Righteousness, who witnessed before an evil world, by their deeds as well as sayings, the truths of the Religion of Christ Jesus. So we see how it is that the blade sprung up and brought forth fruit. But side by side with this were the tares shooting forth likewise. The enemy had been so cautious to perform his work well,—his calculations had been so truly founded on fact, and his design so successful—that while the seed was flourishing, the tares were abounding likewise. The germ of original sin first found standing ground when Eve fell, and has increased abundantly, and blossomed poisonous blooms ever since. Actual sin—in a thousand shapes and ramifications—has but too successfully choked the good seed, and ruined immortal souls. In one moment did some deadly transgression strip the transgressor of his graces, and merit immediate punishment from God. Even as of old. Our first parents lost their original righteousness in one day. “When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to

make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat." From that moment the gifts of God, which they possessed, were altogether lost. Sin wounded their souls, and gave them up to the tyranny of the devil. It cast them out of Paradise, and condemned them both to a temporal and eternal death. A legion of evils—both of body and soul—was, from that hour, let loose upon them. They knew that they were naked. They no longer, in the cool of the day, heard the Voice of their Maker in the garden of Eden without fear. Adam and his wife hid themselves from the Presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden. Thus was entailed upon the whole human race an inexpressible weakness with regard to the doing of good, and a violent inclination to evil, which has filled the world with countless sins, and with fearful judgments in punishment of sin. Evil of every character, weight and malignity—pride, lust, envy, hatred, malice, impurity and false doctrine—has done its deadly work. Cotemporaneous with the shooting upwards of the good seed, sprang up the

bad likewise. When the wheat brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also.

“So the servants of the householder,” we read, “came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? From whence, then, hath it tares?” Are these servants, therefore, the same as those whom our Blessed Lord afterwards calls the reapers? Because, in His exposition of the parable, He expounds the reapers to be the angels, and as none would dare to say that the angels were ignorant as to who had sowed the tares, we should rather understand that the faithful, generally, are here intended by the servants. And is it not most true that too many Christians are impatient of the existence of evil, and cannot bear to witness the deadly effects of sin? They expect that all will go smoothly with the Church, that Her progress will be sure and successful; and that Her triumph will be a triumph of their own day. They look for more than they obtain. Their best anticipations are disappointed. “Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? From whence, then, hath it tares?”

“He saith unto them, an enemy hath done this.” Yea, even the devil, the great

accuser, the enemy of souls. He is called the enemy of souls on account of the losses he inflicts on men ; for the assaults of the devil are made upon us—though their origin be not in his enmity towards us, but towards God. “ And when His servants,” writes St. Augustine, “ knew that it was the devil who had contrived this fraud, whereby—when he found that he possessed but little power, in open warfare, against a Master of so great a Name, he had introduced his fallacies under cover of that Name itself—the desire might readily arise in them to remove such men from out of human affairs, if opportunity should be given them ; but they first appeal to God’s justice, whether this should be so.” “ The servants said unto Him, Wilt thou, then, that we go and gather them up ? But He said, Nay ; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them.” Here we perceive the thoughtfulness and hearty affection of the servants. They hasten to root up the tares ; thus evidencing their great anxiety about the good seed ; for this is their desire, not that any should be punished, but that that which is sown should not be allowed to perish. Our Blessed Saviour’s answer, “ Nay ;” teaches us that room for

repentance ought ever to be given, and warns us that we should not hastily cut off a brother, since one who to-day is corrupted with erroneous teaching, may, to-morrow, grow wiser, and begin to defend the truth;—wherefore, also, is immediately added, “Lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up the wheat also.” Therefore should we be patient and tranquil. And, no doubt, this additional explanation is added to the response “Nay;” because good men, while still weak, have need, in some particulars, to be mixed up with the evil; either that they may be proved,—“prove all things, hold fast that which is good,”—or that, by comparison, the evil may be drawn from their sin, and the good disposed to become better. Or, perhaps, the good seed is declared to be rooted up if the tares should be gathered out of the field, on account of many, who—though at first tares—would afterwards become wheat; yet would they never attain to this commendable change, were they not patiently endured with while they were evil. Therefore He forbids that such should be taken away out of this life, lest, in the endeavour to destroy the wicked, those of them should be destroyed amongst the rest who might after-

wards turn out good ; and for fear that the benefit should be lost to the good, which would most probably arise to them—even against their will—from mixing with the sinful. But this may be done seasonably, when, at the end of all things, their remains no more time or opportunity for repentance or amendment,—no more chances of advancing to the truth, either by seizing a fitting opportunity or by a comparison with other's faults. Therefore are we carried on unto the Last Great Day, when our Blessed Lord adds :—" Let both grow together until the harvest." And gives, further, the reason for so doing, " Lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them." Therefore, let a man gently reprove whatever is in his power ; what is not so, let him bear with patience and mourn over with affection, until He Who comes from above shall correct and heal, judge and determine, root out the tares and winnow out the chaff.

Then follow the words of the text, which deserve our most serious and attentive consideration, " Let both grow together until the harvest ; and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to

burn them : but gather the wheat into My barn." Now this is one of those many statements of Holy Scripture which form the basis of that well-known concluding paragraph in the Athanasian Creed—"They that have done good shall go into life everlasting, and they that have done evil into everlasting fire. This is the Catholic Faith, which, except a man believe faithfully, he cannot be saved." Here we have a lesson of justice from the Lips of the Just One Himself,—a lesson which cannot fail to commend itself to all. The tares shall be bound in bundles to be burnt. The wheat shall be gathered into His barn.

Let us consider these two points severally, and with God's blessing, we may carry away some more true knowledge of our own immediate weakness and wants, and of God's loving-kindness and mercy, than we have ever yet learnt.

I. The tares shall be bound in bundles to be burnt. Now here is a truth that one day or another, sooner or later ; in life and health ; on our death-beds, or, when our souls cross the Jordan of death, we must most infallibly consider and face. Here is

the recorded punishment for sin. Here, as elsewhere, the Bible declares that the wicked shall be turned into Hell, and all the people that forget God. Here we have a direct parabolic illustration, concerning which there can be no manner of doubt—which bears its meaning on its very surface. Here, we seem to be carried on from the present to the future, from our life here,—with all its manifold cares, concerns, trials, temptations, and sins,—to our last end, and our life hereafter. Here the Finger of Christ Jesus seems to point forward to that Great and Terrible Day, when the heavens shall melt with fervent heat, or pass away like a gathered scroll, and the earth shall reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man. Here, in these words, the Voice of Christ Jesus seems to thrill through our very inmost being; reminding us of the Day of Reckoning, and of the eternal punishment of sin. Here, in meditation upon them, we might almost imagine that Time had for ever fled;—that the calls and warnings, the exhortations to repentance, and the promises of God, were never more to be uttered. We might easily conceive that the days of probation were gone for ever and ever, and

that nothing remained but the unerring record of God, the dreaded accusations of the tempter, and the fire that never shall be quenched. Around and about us the cry for pardon, when punishment is at hand, and a piercing call upon the mountains and hills to shield the lost from the piercing gaze of an insulted and offended God.

Gather ye together first the tares. This shall be the work of the Angels of God. They shall separate the just from the bad, the wheat from the chaff, the good seed from the tares. They have grown together year by year, and age by age. The wicked have had their day long enough. The works of the flesh have wrought evil continually, and now shall work evil no longer. No more temptation, no more time for trial, no more days of probation. Side by side, with the examples of the righteous and the warnings from God, have the wicked lived without life: but now have they attained to the just punishment of eternal death. They are summoned by the voice of the Archangel and the trump of God into the Presence of the All-righteous and All-just Judge. The long-forgotten graves of earth render back their prey,—the burial places of every nation

pour forth their thousands upon thousands. The sea gives up her dead. In their own natural bodies, with a perfect identity—for we “believe in the resurrection of the body,”—shall they rise once more; and their souls being again re-united, shall dwell in them for evermore. Then shall the Book be opened,—then shall the accuser step forth,—then shall the memory of sin revive, and the awful sentence follow:—“Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.” “Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them.” “Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire.”

II. Furthermore we read—“But gather the wheat into My barn.” Now this portion of the text and parable is that which should form the subject of true consolation to us all in our meditation upon this teaching of our Blessed Saviour. Gather the wheat into My barn. When grain is first scattered over land in the early Spring, there remains much to be performed before the corn can be expected to arrive at maturity. Warm rain and gentle dews are needed to make it spring upwards;—the

ground has to be tilled, the weeds to be removed, the blade to be protected, the fowls of the air to be driven off. April must come with its showers, and Summer with its sunshine, before the ripening glow of Autumn gilds the fields and perfects the grain. Then at last are the weeds burnt, and the wheat gathered into the barns.

So is it now with mankind until the harvest comes. So shall it be until the Last Great Day. We have already considered briefly the sentence of the wicked. Now, therefore, on the other hand, let us contemplate the reward of the righteous. Gather the wheat into My barn. Since first the grain of grace was scattered,—since first the Sower went out to sow His seed,—how many bitter, biting winds have ravaged the field! How many storms and tempests have swept over the soil! The seed has been trodden down; some has fallen on a rock, some has been scorched up by the sun, while some has been devoured by the fowls of the air. Yet that which does remain, if it stand until harvest, shall be garnered into the barns of Heaven. O, then, let us consider in what way we receive the seed of God's word, let us diligently inquire, how

we correspond to the divine graces and calls; for upon this depends our eternal salvation. If we bring forth good fruit, we shall attain to everlasting life—we shall live on for endless ages in the kingdom of Heaven,—we shall at last be safe and secure from every danger and every foe, in the Presence of our Saviour and our God.

Again: Gather the wheat into My barn. That which is neither trodden under foot, nor carried away by the fowls of the air,—that which springs up and flourishes, and which brings forth much fruit,—that shall be gathered into the barn. Thus, then, must we ever strive to become good ground, so that the seed of God's grace may take root and blossom abundantly. We must labour,—as it is elsewhere exhorted us to do,—to become of the number of those who, in faith and patience, in an honest and good heart, are making due preparation for the seed. We must hear the word and keep it,—not out of idle curiosity, but for our own better instruction and edification, not to carp or criticise, but to let it sink into our souls for the true reformation of our present lives. We must embrace it as the word and truth of God, brought down

upon earth by the Son of God, and designed to carry us to Heaven. We must keep it, by laying it up,—as a great and precious spiritual treasure,—in our minds; we must meditate upon it, follow its light, and regulate all our actions by its precepts. We must daily bring forth fruit, and continually advance in every Christian grace and virtue; increasing in the love of God, and travelling along the way of perfection. No opposition or difficulty must turn us aside, make us change our course, or damp our energy; but in the face of every foe,—whether the world, the flesh, or the devil,—must we stand firm and constant, patient, obedient and faithful until His coming, Who comes to judge both the quick and the dead, and to reward every man according as his work shall be.

Furthermore, then: let us be always scrupulously careful to protect these seeds of grace, which Christ the Sower has so bountifully and mercifully scattered upon the ground of our hearts. Let us till and nourish, let us water with the tears of sorrow, and seek after the light of Heaven;—let us not be indifferent or apathetic: but earnest, devoted, brave, ready and sincere,

and then shall the corn of grace be safely garnered at last. Above all, let us not procrastinate or delay to perform that which Christ Jesus most surely expects at our hands. Delays are dangerous. No means are more successful in the hands of the enemy of souls than this. He would lull the conscience into a false security. He would urge that the weeds of sin and the tares of disobedience will not draw the nourishment from the soil; but that the seeds of grace will grow quite as well without any care or attention. He would suggest that everything should be left to chance. More especially would he propose delay. But, how many, who have put off their repentance and conversion, have gone on provoking the Divine justice until some terrible judgment from God has cut them off when they least expected it, and, dying as they lived, have been justly sentenced to that second and most fearful death eternal which is the doom of the lost. They would not believe. They would not be warned. They would not watch. They delayed and procrastinated. Christ came and called—as a thief in the night—and theirs was everlasting woe!

But this is not for those who are tendering the grace with devotion, and increasing it by continual prayer. They, who knowing fully the merciful goodness of God, are working in obedience and faith, can be almost certain of not being found castaways, but of being garnered into the heavenly barns. They have been allowed to grow until the harvest, in order that the stem of grace might become stronger, the blade broader, the root deeper, the fruit more rich. They have ever looked on to the end of all things, to the coming of the Son of Man, to the final and general judgment, to the everlasting reward, which no man can take away. They, realising the bright fact that God has been loving them from all eternity, and is continually loading them with graces, will be continually preparing for that end. They have believed,—and have acted as though they believed it,—that His Eye was ever upon them, that He continually preserved them from innumerable evils, that His very angels ministered unto them in a wonderful order, and that His Own only-begotten Son came down from Heaven to ransom them by Dying on the Cross;—therefore have they watched carefully the

ground of their hearts. They have tilled and watered, rooted up weeds, and scared away the enemy of souls, who would have devoured and destroyed the good seed, and rejoiced in his success. They have ever had the harvest at the end of the world before their mind's eye. They have been successfully watching for the coming of the enemy, and so, not having slept; no tares have been scattered amongst the corn. Therefore as their faith is certain and their love broad, so is their hope for the future firm, deep, and immoveable. They believe that the end of all things is at hand, they are confident, that He Who shall come will come, and will not tarry; they strive daily more and more to love God with all their hearts,—and in deed as well as word,—to love their neighbours as themselves. Their hope is sure and certain; because they trust in Him, Who is the Anchor of their soul during her passage across a stormy sea; and, therefore, but few fears abound. Many a time have they fought against Me from my youth up, may Israel now say: yea, many a time have they vexed me from my youth up, but they have not prevailed against me. The ploughers ploughed upon my back and made long fur-

rows. But the righteous Lord hath hewn the snare of the ungodly in pieces. The Lord Himself is thy keeper, the Lord is thy defence upon thy right hand ; so that the sun shall not burn thee by day, neither the moon by night. The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil ; yea, it is even He that shall keep thy soul. The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth for evermore.

God grant that these words in their fullness may apply to us ! Christ give us fresh seed, again and again, and shed the dew of His omnipotent grace continually upon our hearts ! The Holy Ghost direct our minds into the patient waiting for the Judgment Day ; and grant that when the tares of sin are bound together to be burned, and the awful sentence of the wicked has been pronounced, we may hear those joyful words, “ Come, ye blessed children of My Father, receive the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” “ Gather the wheat into My barn.” Amen.

Septuagesima Sunday.

MANY CALLED, BUT FEW CHOSEN.

“So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen.”—**ST. MATTHEW** **xx.** 16.

THIS saying of our Lord is so often repeated in connection with the allotment of men's destiny in His kingdom, that it seems to indicate a principle in the Gospel; and it is a principle, which will baffle and set at nought the calculations and judgments of mankind. It respects the order in which men will be placed in the spiritual kingdom, in one or other of the states in which it is presented to us, either as to the enjoyment of its privileges here, or the distribution of its rewards hereafter; and it is an order which will surprise us, seeing it will be quite different from what we should have antecedently expected, judging as men usually do. Those whom we would have expected to be first will be last, and the last will be first. We have an illustration of the principle in the parable of the labourers in the vineyard, which occurs

in our Gospel to-day. That illustration may help us to ascertain and fix the application of the principle.

The parable, indeed, is not without its difficulty, arising chiefly from the uncertainty of what is meant by the several hours at which the labourers were sent into the vineyard. All would be plain and easy if we could accept the popular view, which supposes the hours at which the householder went forth, to denote corresponding periods in the term of man's pilgrimage on earth; and then goes on to infer from the result, that it is of no consequence with respect to the future reward, at what time of his life a Christian begins to do, in earnest, the works of his holy calling—that in the Day of Judgment he will be neither better nor worse, whether he hath been early or late in the heavenly service, provided he has set about it at all—that, in that last awful hour, it will be all the same with him, whether he has begun in infancy, in youth, in manhood; in maturer age, or, in the last stage of decrepitude, when the shades of evening are already closing around him. This, it is sometimes said, will be no question at the Last Day; all who have given themselves to God's service

at any time of their lives, will be all alike at the last, and receive every man an equal reward, however long or however short may have been their period of labour.

This may seem the simplest and most natural exposition of the parable, as it is certainly the exposition which would suit best with human indolence, and with the actual condition of too many among Christians. But there are several reasons why it cannot be accepted as the true one. It involves one or other of these fundamental mistakes;—either that the Church is not the vineyard here mentioned, or that men are not called into the vineyard at holy baptism, or that it makes no material difference whether they fulfil or neglect the obligations of that state of grace and salvation, in which they were placed. The labourers were called into the vineyard at different hours of the day, but when once called, they laboured, each and all of them, in their allotted task; and before the case can be parallel to that of the careless and disobedient Christian, who has been brought into the vineyard, and yet neglected or refused to work, an instance must be shown, in which no difference was made between the diligent and the idle. But

the parable affords no example of this, and so cannot be received as a delineation of the method in which God will deal with Christians individually at the Last Day. The point of similarity consists in the circumstances of men's *calling* into the Church, and not in their conduct after they have been called into it; and this necessarily excludes those, who have been all their lives long in the Church,—those who were engaged early in the morning, that is, in their very infancy, to serve God in His vineyard. It cannot be with them as with the labourers in the parable, if they shall stand all the day idle, neglecting the work which God hath given them to do, and then bethink themselves at the eleventh hour, and commence *then* to do the work, which they ought to have begun at the very first. No Christian surely can say, when he comes to the closing period of life, without having given any diligence to “abound in the work of the Lord,”—no Christian can then say, with the persons in the parable, “no man hath hired us;” for all have been devoted to God in the very morning of life. To all, the font of baptism is the “first hour,” when the Divine Householder engaged them in His service, to work

in His vineyard during the whole day of this earthly life. From that moment each baptized person is bound to "fight manfully under the banner of the Cross against sin, the world, and the devil, and to continue Christ's faithful soldier and servant unto his life's end." If any one thus engaged shall shrink from "the burden and heat of the day," and neglect the task assigned him, or refuse to work in the Lord's vineyard,—if such a one return at all, he must return, not as one who never had been hired, but as a servant, who has been slothful in his Master's work,—as a soldier who has been unfaithful to his vow, deserted the standard of his Leader, and taken part with the enemies of his Prince. That he may be pardoned and accepted by the grace and mercy of his Lord is true; and opportunity may still be given him to redeem the time. But it cannot be all the same with him, as if he had been faithful to his engagement, and borne the burden and heat of an unswerving course of service. He has to return through the painful discipline of penance, and after a struggle with bad habits; and though there is a sense in which the saying of our Lord may be verified even in such, it is rather in some

extraordinary instances, intended to manifest the power and plenteousness of Divine grace, than in the settled order of God's dispensations in the Church. There have been those "born to God out of due time," who have yet won the first place in the holiness and glory of the saints; but this is the exception. The late called may become pre-eminent among the first, but we cannot say that this is God's way of dealing with men generally. It is not the rule of His final judgment, nor the measure by which He distributes His grace here. It is not the sort of case to which the parable in our Gospel is intended to apply. The hours of the day would rather seem to denote the several ages of the world, at which God called men into His service by some distinct act of His mysterious Providence, without any reference to the periods of man's life, farther than as the term allotted to our existence upon earth may be supposed to have some analogy to the duration of the world itself, so that each may be susceptible of a similar division, and correspond to one another in their several parts.

There is an allusion, it may be thought, in the significance of the term Septuagesima, to the different eras of providential dispen-

sation represented in the parable, as symbolized in the duration of human life ; and this may account, perhaps, for the parable being appropriated to the service of this particular Sunday. There may be other, and doubtless more obvious reasons for the name which the Sunday bears in the Calendar of the Church ; but from its connection with the season of Lent, which denotes the way of regaining our heavenly kingdom by penitence and mortification, it may be supposed to have some allusion to the present life, as the time of wandering and pilgrimage in consequence of our fall from the happiness of Eden. Seventy years, according to the Psalmist, is the ordinary term allotted to man's sojourn here ; and within the limits of that period we have the several stages of infancy, youth, manhood, mature life and old age, corresponding to the different hours at which the householder went forth to hire labourers into his vineyard. But as each single individual may be regarded as, in some sort, an emblem of the whole race, all being alike in their beginning and their end ; so may the several divisions of our life be emblematic of the world itself, and correspond to different eras

in God's providential dealing with the human family from the creation of Adam to the end of time. The hours in the parable would then answer to so many distinct, though unequal portions of time, each marking the introduction of a new step in the course of training and discipline by which God emancipates his elect, calling them out of the evil world into the Church, there to be exercised in works of holy obedience, till they be fitted to return to their lost kingdom. In this view the early morning, at which the householder first went out, would signify the time from Adam to Noah; the third hour, the interval from Noah to Abraham; the sixth hour, the space between Abraham and Moses; the ninth, the period from Moses to Christ; and the eleventh hour, the whole duration of the Gospel from the coming of Christ to the end of the world, which is always spoken of in the New Testament as "the last time," "the last days," or "the last hour." After it there is to be no more calling of men into the vineyard,—no further time of labour and trial. It is "the eleventh hour," after which comes the evening, when the labourers will be called that each may receive his "hire"

or reward according to his works. The result of this final reckoning will be different from what men would have antecedently expected. Many who seemed in human estimation to be most distinguished, and to have made the greatest attainments, and bid fairest for a high reward, will be last of all; while many a poor and despised saint, whom the world knew nothing of, will come forth from his obscurity, and take the place which human judgment would have assigned to another, and "so the last shall be first, and the first last."

"The evening," which closes up this world's day of labour and trial, will be the time of judgment and recompense to all alike, at whatever time they have been called to do God's work. Those who were called first will not be judged before us who have been called last. Though each individual's day of labour may be closed, judgment does not immediately follow upon it. Each man's destiny for good or ill in the intermediate state is fixed by what is called the particular judgment; but there is a sense in which all alike have to wait for the evening of the world's day, when judgment takes place once for all, and *upon* all. The

labourers are called altogether at once, when the time of labour comes to its final close, when the night cometh, in which there is no more work. All will be called to receive their "hire" at one and the same time, at whatever "hour" they may have been called to do the Lord's work in His vineyard,—those who were called in the infancy of the world, together with those who have been called in its last age. There is but one "evening" of judgment and recompense reserved for all. As it was at the first Advent of Christ, so will it be at His second. All things were "recapitulated," or gathered together in Him. The saints who went before had to wait for the fulfilment of the promise till He came; they had no advantage over those who came after, "God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect." At the "eleventh hour" all were gathered together under the One Head Christ Jesus, the sole fountain of life and grace and blessing to the ages which had gone before, as well as to those which have come after; and it was an astonishment and offence to many that all should be made alike in the privileges of the Gospel,—that the last called

should be made equal to the first, who had been so much longer in the vineyard of God, “that the Gentiles should be made fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of Christ through the Gospel.” So when Christ comes again in the evening of the world, it will be an astonishment, but no longer an offence, to the blessed, when they shall see many come from the east and from the west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of Heaven; while they who have been the children of the kingdom are cast out. The strange and eventful revelations of that hour, the bringing to light the hidden things of darkness which will then take place, and the consequent putting down one and setting up another, will illustrate the fewness of the chosen in comparison of the multitude of the called. It may be that that distinction will take place even among the elect of God, so far at least as this;—that of those who have given up all for Christ’s sake, some who were least likely may go before others, and without lessening their intrinsic excellence, or diminishing their reward, may attain a place to which in the world’s eye they had no pretensions.

But the fact seems to be that, with respect to the saying in the text, there is some deeper truth in it than the mere existence of various degrees of excellence among the chosen. It is not intended simply to intimate that, among the saints, "one star differeth from another star in glory." It seems rather to be adverse to that view. It seems to say that all will be equal,—as all the labourers, at the close of day, received every man a penny, so will all be equally rewarded in the life to come, which is true only in this sense, that each man whose lot is among the blessed, will receive all that is sufficient for his felicity, all that is needful to fill his capacity of joy. In the Church militant all participate in one and the same grace, which is in Christ Jesus, but all do not receive the same measure of grace, nor make the same improvement; so in the Church above, though all drink of the same exhaustless river of joy, and each finds the entire fulfilment of his desire, all are not capable of the like intensity of spiritual perception, because all have not attained an equal degree of spiritual advancement.

But this is not the point on which the

last words of the text fix our attention. They refer to the persons who shall be chosen and accepted, and not to the measure of their recompense; and they announce the startling and awful fact, that the numbers of the chosen will be few. "Many are called, but few are chosen." It has been so in all ages,—at all the "hours" in this world's day, when God, the great Householder, went out to hire labourers into His vineyard. It was so in the first ages; and it is so now under the Gospel,—the called are the many, the chosen are the few. We do not know why it is so. Our Lord, Who so often asserts it, does not explain how it is. He only states it either definitely as a doctrine, or historically as a fact, without assigning any reason for it. Some would explain it by saying that God does not *will* to save more than the chosen few, and these He selects from the multitude of the called, and leaves the rest to perish. On the other hand, we would rather say that the chosen are few, because the many are not willing to do God's work. We are told in Holy Scripture that "The Lord is not willing that *any* should perish, but that *all* should come to the knowledge of the truth and be saved."

It is not of Him, the Holy, the Just, the Merciful, that any of those whom He hath called are lost. It is the consequence of man's perverse *will*, which does not correspond to His call, but resists the Holy Ghost, and refuses to co-operate with the grace, which prevents, assists, and perfects, those who yield themselves to it with a willing and a loving spirit. This, indeed, does not make it at all clearer why so many resist the grace of God, and so forfeit their election. It only opposes a wrong way of accounting for a fact which cannot be denied. There must be a difficulty and mystery about it, explain it how we may. Yet one way of explaining it may be better than another; one may be true and another false; and we say that the fewness of the chosen is the consequence of the opposition of the will of man to the grace of God. We accept this as the truth, not as bringing us much nearer to an explanation of the mystery, but because it is the truth revealed, and like every other truth has a bearing and an influence upon other things, whether we know it or not, as in this very instance the truth gives point to the admonition of our Lord,—“ Strive to enter in at the strait gate,

for many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able,”—and to this warning of St. Peter,—“ Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure.” .

It seems to be with this precise view of stirring us up to diligence, that the fewness of the chosen is put before us as a great and concerning truth. This is the use which St. Paul makes of it in our Epistle to-day,—“ Know ye not that they who run in a race run *all*, but *one* receiveth the prize. So run that ye may obtain;”—meaning not only that there are few who shall be finally successful, but that of those, who do run, *some* may run and yet not obtain, as our Lord had said before that of those who seek to enter in at the strait gate, “ Many shall seek to enter in and shall not be able.” Yet while we are taught to acquiesce in the mysteriousness of the fact, the terms of the admonition plainly imply, that the only use we should make of it is to strive that we ourselves be of those who are able to enter. Were it an easy thing to enter in at the strait gate, we might not be very apprehensive of missing it; if the chosen were many instead of few, we might think it likely that we shall be of the number: but when we

are told that the way of life is strait and difficult, and the number of the chosen few, the chances, so to say, against our succeeding are multiplied, and the necessity for earnestness and diligence becomes more urgent in proportion to the probability or risk of ultimate failure. We are sure that none but the earnest can succeed. None can enter the strait gate, but they who strive. It is not enough to wish or seek to enter; they must strive—strive as in a struggle for life. It may be that in this course of effort, they who seemed for a time to linger on their way, or to come late to the struggle or the race, may overtake those who are far in advance, or by the greatness of their efforts even surpass them; and thus may the parable be realized with respect to the everlasting destiny of individuals,—“The first may be last, and the last first.” Their sins, which were many, having been forgiven, they may “love much;” sensible of God’s great mercy and grace in their recovery, they may use such unwearied diligence, such intense earnestness, and make such sacrifices to regain the ground they have lost, that they may really do more in a short

time, than others, to whom it has been given to keep a more uniform course. We have an instance of this in St. Paul, to whom Christ appeared last of all, as to "one born out of due time," and who, because of this, "laboured more abundantly than they all." He sought to show his sense of the greatness of God's love and pity, by devoting himself more ardently to God's service. He endeavoured, if it might be, to undo the past; not that the past can really be undone in any case; but he acted as if it might, as every true penitent will act. He sought to crowd into a short time all that amount of labour and effort, which in other cases is spread over a longer space of trial; and thus, though last, he became first, not a whit behind the very chiefest Apostles.

We may observe that the householder made a special agreement with those whom he engaged at the certain hours of the day; but when he came to those at the eleventh hour, he made no stipulation with them, gave them no direct promise, but told them to go into the vineyard in simple reliance on his justice,—“Go ye also into the vineyard,

and whatsoever is right that shall ye receive.” We may conceive that this unconditional nature of the call addressed to them, corresponds to the call of those who come late to God’s service; and indicates the state of mind, with which they should address themselves to the great work before them. They must make an unconditional surrender of themselves to God, stipulating for nothing, forming no definite hope, desiring only to be accepted on any terms, not venturing to be confident of their acceptance, not presuming even to conjecture whether they shall be accepted or not, but labouring with the zeal of the most ardent, and being contented at last to take their place with the lowest, to be less than the least in the kingdom of Heaven. It may not be all the same with them as if they had borne the burden and heat of the day. To pursue their way amidst doubtfulness, and the sense of shame, and the bitterness of repentance, is in itself a painful state; and to be saved, yet so as by fire, must indicate some penalty to mark the evil of having gone wrong. The blessedness of having at length returned to God’s service is not always experienced here in its fulness. It is

only when the evening is come that it shall be known how it will be with them. Yet of such as these may be the very persons in whom will be verified the saying of our Lord,—“The last shall be first and the first last.” When the rewards of the kingdom come to be distributed at the Last Day, these may be the very first upon whom the crowns of glory will be bestowed. Though once outcasts in the dark scenes of sin, or idlers in the market place of a vain world, they may yet be numbered among God’s chosen ones. The greatest saints have sometimes risen from the lowest depths of sin ; and in these most of all has God shown, how “the last have become first.” They are the standing witnesses of His boundless mercy, the great examples of the power and freeness of His grace, that the sinner may never despair of forgiveness, nor they who labour to save souls become faint and weary as if their task were hopeless. But that no presumptuous trust in the Divine goodness may tempt men to go on in sin, we must remember, that though “many be called, few are chosen.” None are more likely to be among the rejected and the lost, than they who

ve heard God's call to "arise from the ad," and yet continue in sin, because ace aboundeth. May He give us the spirit vays so to trust in His mercy and grace, never to abuse His goodness, forbearance, d long-suffering, which lead us to repent-
ce.

C.

Seragesima Sunday.

THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER.

“A sower went out to sow his seed.”—ST. LUKE viii. 5.

BEFORE we proceed to consider especially these words of our Blessed Lord, it may be well for us to hear once again the entire parable which has been already read from the altar.

“A sower went out to sow his seed ; and as he sowed, some fell by the way-side, and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it. And some fell upon a rock, and as soon as it was sprung up it withered away, because it lacked moisture. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprung up with it, and choked it. And other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit an hundredfold.

“And when He had said these things, He cried, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. And His disciples asked Him, saying, What might this parable be ? And He said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries

of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand. Now the parable is this: The seed is the Word of God. Those by the way-side are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the Word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the Word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away. And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares, and riches, and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection. But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the Word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience."

Now our Blessed Lord in these words speaks of Divine truth under the figure of seed, and represents the propagation of it in the human heart by one of the most common operations of husbandry. "A sower went forth to sow." And He tells us that the seed which he sowed is the "Word of God," or simply the Word—"the sower

soweth the Word." He is represented as scattering it as it were promiscuously, making no choice of the soil on which it fell, but going on his way spreading abroad his seed upon the face of the ground; leaving it to the chance of taking root, or of failing,—as it might be.

Now this, as I said, is plainly a representation of the dissemination of Divine truth, whether by preaching the Gospel or by any other way in which the truth is taught. The teacher cannot select his objects, or know beforehand by whom the truth will be profitably received, any more than the sower could choose his soil, or foresee where the seed would be fruitful. In neither case was it given to human eyes to discriminate the hidden qualities which renders the soil of the human heart, or the surface of the ground well or ill-fitted to bring forth fruit. Both are represented as acting in faith, scattering their seed upon all who came in their way, without knowing beforehand which would prosper, this or that.

So it is with the Word as with the seed—with the teacher of Divine truth as with the sower of earthly grain. And it is with the human heart, also, as with the different

kinds of soil on which the seed hath fallen. Some bring forth no fruit: the seed takes no root at all. In others it looks well for a while, and then perishes. In some it prospers and brings forth more or less abundantly. This our Lord calls the good ground, representing the honest and good heart. There the seed remains, and finds a soil adapted to it. All things are favourable to its growth, and it yields a joyful harvest. St. Luke, in the words of the Gospel, means, we suppose, to point out the same thing, because he represents what is the result of the seed remaining in one who has received it. Such an one doth not commit sin. And I presume that such a statement cannot differ in any respect from what is meant by bringing forth fruit in our Saviour's parable. St. John says, "He that is born of God doth not commit sin." And why doth he not commit sin? The same Apostle answers, "Because his seed remaineth in him." And what can the seed be but that which hath been sown by the Divine Sower? What can it be but the Word of God as our Lord calls it? Nor is it any objection to this, that by a slight change of figure the seed is connected in

the text of St. John with a Divine birth of God. For St. Peter says, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." Thus we may observe that the same thing is represented in different places under a slight modification of the emblem used to express it. At one time Divine truth is the seed which, being planted in the human heart, brings forth a harvest of good works, with the risk certainly of failure, and with actual failure in a great many instances in which the Word is sown.

Again : at another time the seed is spoken of as the element of a new being, the principle out of which springs what is elsewhere called the "new man." And this production of the new being is called by St. Peter the being "born again," and by our Saviour the sowing or taking root of the seed ; while St. Luke, in the Gospel, represents the seed in the full vigour of its growth as preserving from sin those who have received and kept it : "And others fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit an hundredfold." But we see that in either case the Word of God is the principle out of which all these

results flow; not saying, however, what that Word is. I have used it as equivalent to Divine truth, rather—than as some persons prefer understanding it—to reading the Bible, or preaching the Gospel; because these indicate certain ways of disseminating Divine truth: while neither our Lord, another relation of the parable, and St. Luke in the text, speak of any particular method of making it known. Our Lord speaks generally of sowing it, and St. Luke of its fruitfulness, leaving the mode of imparting it quite indeterminate, so as to embrace every mode of teaching by which Divine truth can be communicated to the heart of man.

But the passage of St. Peter just referred to seems to give a deeper meaning to the Word than we have as yet seen. Our Lord seems to speak of the doctrines or truths of religion under the term “Word of God;” but St. Peter uses the very same term, with attributes which cannot properly belong to doctrines or the Word spoken or written—“being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.” Now what Word of God can be said to live and

abide for ever, except the Uncreated Word—that Word which was in the beginning *with* God, and was God? He is in Himself the living Word, because He is the Life itself: and He alone it is Who can be the origin of life in others. To Him alone it belongs to be the second Parent of the chosen seed, and give to men a new birth from Heaven. Divine truth is not in itself a living agent, and so cannot be the origin of life in others; and though, as the seed, it may be said to have in it a principle of fruitfulness, it always needs a supernatural influence, corresponding to the natural agencies—the sun and air and showers which fertilize the seed cast into the bosom of the earth. That supernatural influence, St. Peter tells us, is the “Word of God which liveth and abideth for ever.” The same thing is, indeed, suggested by St. John elsewhere, who seems to combine both the views given by our Saviour and St. Peter; for he speaks of the new birth from God and of the seed, as the principle which preserves from sin him who retains it. But to produce so great an effect there must be the presence of a Divine and living agent, for the seed cannot of itself preserve from sin any more than it can give that new birth

f God, which none can bestow but the Lord and Maker of the New Creation. The full doctrine would seem to be this,—that Divine truth, or the Word of God,—meaning the revelation from Him,—is used as an instrument through which the living and consubstantial Word of the Father works to produce holiness in the heart of man, whether considered in its origin in the new birth, or in its progress and maturity in confirmed holiness, or freedom from sin, as St. John calls it: so that when our Lord speaks of truth under the emblem of seed, He speaks of it as accompanied with a principle of grace. That principle may be called either the “Word of God which liveth and abideth for ever,” or the Presence of God the Holy Ghost. But in no case can the soul be understood as destitute of grace, whether applied to the new birth, or to the course of holiness as symbolized in the soil bringing forth fruit. One may say, in a single word, that the “Seed” is the principle of Divine grace in the heart, for that principle must be at the root of all good in the souls of men. Truth, as in Divine truth, has in itself no germinating power till fertilized by the grace of the Holy Spirit, or by the Pre-

sence and power of the ever-living and substantial Word, for it matters not which we speak of as the agent. It is all the same to say either that Christ's Presence, the Holy Spirit, or simply that grace is the seed sown and the seed retained, which preserves from sin and brings forth fruit. Neither does it make any difference whether we say that grace—meaning Divine truth—comes through the Word, or that grace is first planted in our hearts, which being retained and once cherished there, all other things succeed—truth flourishes, sin is avoided, and holiness matured. For this may vary according to the circumstances of different individuals, as they are received earlier or later into the Church. In infancy or in mature life the grace may precede the knowledge of truth, as the truth may prepare the way for the reception of grace. In those who have been received into the Church by Holy Baptism in their infancy, grace goes before truth. The seed has been planted at once which is to expand and grow up, if it so be, into perfect sinlessness. All that we do for such persons, or towards them, must proceed from the clear recognition of the fact, that a great grain—the Divine Seed and principle

of all good—has been planted in their hearts to bear fruit, if tended and cherished with care, or to perish if allowed to be carried away by the devil, or to fail through instability, or to be choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of this life. There is a great mystery, no doubt, in all this, and a very painful one too, which it is not given us to penetrate. It is a very painful mystery that there should be among those who receive the principle and seed of grace, so great a difference; why, among all who receive the same Divine gift, there should be a diversity of character, which, in a vast number of instances, prevents it from bringing forth its proper fruit, or renders it entirely useless. The dispositions of the human heart are as various as the soil; some appear unsuitable, one might say, for grace, and as incapable, apparently, of receiving it profitably as the beaten path or the hard rock. And yet our Lord's parable makes it quite certain that the seed of grace was cast upon this unpropitious soil as well as upon the good ground, and they were to be considered and treated as having received it. How all this may be we do not know. Our Lord's parable throws no light upon it, merely recognizing it as a

fact. And as a fact, in the condition of all baptized persons, we must receive it, and act from it towards the end at which we aim in our dealings with them. This is the foundation and principle of all Christian education. It is this which makes Church education differ essentially from all other. Whatever may be taught, or in whatever way men may proceed in their treatment of the young, all teaching and all modes of discipline must be fundamentally wrong which do not recognise as their starting point the great fact, that there is in the soul with which they have to deal a Divine Presence—a gift of supernatural grace, out of which all good may grow; or which may be utterly quenched and destroyed by neglect, or by the storms of error and sin, and worldly love. It is just as necessary that education should conform to this supernatural element of our spiritual existence as that it should correspond to the laws of our moral being. This is the ground at once, and the encouragement of Christian education, that there is a Divine seed in the soul, the existence of which must be recognised in order that it may be tended, and its growth sustained by those other means

of grace which the Church supplies as the proper food of the living soul. Christian education does not consist in treating the Bible like a book of history, and exercising the intellect and the memory in its facts and characters. It consists in training the mind and the heart in the principles of the Catholic Faith simultaneously with the habits and practices of devotion towards God, which the Church enjoins. And if the youth of the Church are not trained in this way, they will be trained in a way inconsistent, or widely opposed to it. There cannot, in fact, be an education purely secular — that is, an education entirely separated from religion. In spite of human theories, religion *will* mingle with all instruction; and if care be not taken that the true religion be the guiding principle of education, some form of false religion will usurp its place, — some lesson, something other than the truth, will be instilled into the mind, whether men will or not. The true faith is taught only by the Church; and if we would have the soul trained in knowledge or in grace, we must seek the means in some system which works out the

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principles of the Church in theory and in practice. It is a mere delusion to suppose that the minds of our children will be saved from error by sending them to schools where they are to receive no direct religious lessons; for, as I said before, religion will mingle with tuition whether we will or not. And I am sure, after long experience, that it needs nothing more to account for the laxity in principle and in practice which is the scandal of our Church, than the carelessness with which parents provide forms and systems of education for their children, so that many are brought up with thoughts and habits which would make it better for them to make no profession of Church membership at all. The end of Christian education, in its proximate endeavour, is to train up the soul born of God, and endowed with the seed of grace, to sinlessness. For this alone can realize its character; thus, "he that is born of God doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin." For this is what the baptized Christian has to be trained to. It is the object to be kept in view in his education, the end to which discipline and instruction must

tend ; and that because the seed is in him which cannot otherwise be brought to maturity but by this culture. It may seem vain indeed and presumptuous to speak of sinlessness as an aim which may be proposed to man's pursuit ; and understood in the strictness of the letter it doubtless is so, and is inconsistent with what St. John himself says in this Epistle : " If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." This is plain enough ; and the sinlessness which is the characteristic of him that is born of God must be such in kind and degree as not to render this plain assertion untrue. Yet it must be a real sinlessness, so far as not to destroy or render barren and unfruitful the seed of grace in the soul. So far as that seed remains and lives in any soul it will not commit sin. The seed of nature may indeed grow up side by side with it, and produce unsightly weeds, but never to such an extent as entirely to choke the better principle. All deadly sin is like the thorns and thistles which killed the good seed ; and therefore such sins cannot be in him who lives the life of grace. The Divine seed

must be ever growing stronger and riper, until at the great harvest of the world it be found to have brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty. Which God, of His infinite mercy, grant to be the case of each of us, for the sake of Jesus Christ our only Lord and Saviour. Amen.

C.

Quinquagesima Sunday.

THE THEOLOGICAL VIRTUES.

“And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.”—1 CORINTHIANS xiii. 13.

THE three Virtues enumerated by St. Paul the Apostle in the words just read—which occur in the Gospel for to-day—are technically known as the Divine or Theological Virtues, and they are so called from the immediate relation they bear to Almighty God. They flow from Him into our souls; and they take our souls, as it were, to Him. Where they are, all is well: without them,—or where even one is wanting,—nought can supply the defect. Let us consider, therefore, at length, as the Church would have us do upon this particular Sunday, this important subject, both in its theological and practical bearings, that so the doctrines taught and the practices enforced, may be placed directly in our pathway, and brought again and again to our recollection.

“And now abideth faith, hope, charity,

these three; but the greatest of these is charity." Let each, then, be considered in the order given.

I. And first, as to Faith. Faith is the first of the theological Virtues in the order of time; but not in the order of importance, because it belongs to the intellect whose action precedes that of the will; and because it is the foundation of the rest of the Virtues, and the gate of spiritual good. For we must believe in God before we can love Him and obey His commandments. Divine Faith, then, is defined to be a gift of God, and a light, illuminated by which, men firmly assent to what God has been pleased to reveal; and which,—whether written or unwritten,—He proposes for acceptance to His Church. It is called the gift of God, because it is freely bestowed by God alone; and exceeds every natural power. By it the intellect is supernaturally raised and illuminated, and though it does not rest on the intellect alone, but needs in addition certain pious motions of the will, so must it ever be practical and not speculative,—a Faith that works by love,—a Faith that brings forth much fruit, for, as we know, Faith without works is dead.

Again : “ Actual Faith,” writes a living prelate, “ is a firm and certain, though not evident, assent to the things which are revealed by God. In that it is firm and certain it differs from opinion, and exceeds it. For the subject of opinion may, and often is, false ; and the assent to it is weak and uncertain ; there is in it a fear and a hesitation with regard to things opined of. In that Faith is a not-evident assent, both understanding, knowledge, and wisdom exceed it, in that they are intellectual virtues, possessing clearness and sight. Habitual Faith is a certain intellectual habit, whereby the intellect is inclined to actual Faith. Explicit Faith is that by which we assent to any doctrine which, with its terms, is known to us. Implicit Faith is that by which certain truths are believed, not as recognised in themselves, but as contained in some other great verity. This is the case of many ignorant Christians. Internal Faith is the assent in the mind. External Faith is that inward assent evidenced by some sign or outward profession. Formed or living Faith is that which is informed by charity, which is the form and perfection of all other virtues. It is Faith working by love. Informed or dead Faith

is the mere assent of the mind without love, like the devils' belief in God."

Faith, then, is a firm belief in all those things which God has revealed and promised. It is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen. These things hoped for are made visible to the soul through Faith. She accepts them; She clings closely to them; She resists as sinful all proud thoughts and imaginative speculations that rise up in opposition. It was Faith that served as the foundation of the works of God's saints of old; it was Faith that made them His friends and favourites.

To continue. Now the merit of Faith, which renders it so acceptable to Almighty God, consists in the fact that it pulls down and destroys man's pride, by leading captive his understanding; by compelling him to believe that which he cannot see, and to adore that which he cannot comprehend. Of old, man fell by pride. He essayed to obtain a more excellent knowledge than God had chosen to bestow, and was cast down. "Behold, the man is become as one of Us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the Tree of Life, and eat, and live for ever.

Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So He drove out the man ; and He placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the Tree of Life.” Therefore, now, when the Second Adam is a quickening Spirit, does it please Almighty God, that after repentance, the most essential step for a man to take is—by an act of profound humility, and humble assent—to have Faith, and believe as He wills. A sacrifice dear to our pride must first be readily made, and truths incomprehensible to the understanding and humbling to man must be accepted, because God so wills.

Again : our Faith must be Catholic. We must not reject this, or refuse to accept that, when pride comes to our assistance ; but we must firmly believe all the Articles of the Christian Faith, for they all equally come from God by Divine Revelation. They are built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets ; they are urged upon our acceptance by the authority of the Church of the Living God, which is the pillar and ground of the Truth. They are supported by the strongest testimonies and evidence by

which the Bible and Christianity themselves are upheld; therefore, to dispute the truth of any Article, is to all intents and purposes to lose all Divine Faith whatsoever. If one stone in the arch be removed, the fabric must speedily fall. Moreover, to accept this, and reject the other, is to believe by fits and starts, and not by Divine authority. For it should be ever borne in mind, that the ground of Faith is, the fact that God has vouchsafed a special revelation. He is the Truth Itself. He cannot deceive; neither can He be deceived. Divine Faith, then, is grounded upon God's infallible Truth. Any lower ground or motive has reference but to human faith, and not to Divine. Faith and opinion wholly differ. Human faith, which falls short of Divine Faith, is, after all, but human opinion.

But Divine Faith—the Faith spoken of in the text—carries with it a greater and higher degree of certainty than any human science whatsoever. Because, nothing can be so certain as that the Truth Himself cannot lie, and that what He has taught must be infallibly true.

And His revelations—or, in other words, the various details of His Faith—are either directly contained in Scripture, or have been

handed down from age to age, by those who are the appointed stewards of His mysteries. The testimony was first delivered to the Saints. It came recommended by such evidences as were abundantly sufficient to convince those who sought, in singleness of heart, that God had indeed spoken. His truths were verily stamped as Divine. Ancient prophecy and wonder-working word—the deaf hearing, the leper cleansed, the dead raised, the numberless manifest tokens of Divine grace—bore testimony to the truths of God. His Church, too—first illuminated with Pentecostal gifts, and then blest in Her mission—ever bore testimony to the Faith which She proclaimed as having received it from God Himself. She was shadowed forth, and foretold in centuries long gone by, by abundantly clear and merciful promises. With sign and wonder, by the grace of healing and the gift of tongues, was She firmly and permanently established. In spite of the opposition of the world and the devil, every nation soon experienced Her influence. The blood of Her Martyrs and the lives of Her Saints, of every age and race, have borne testimony to the truths She proclaims. The best and the wisest have humbly followed

Her, the most holy and learned have stood up in Her defence. She has held forth a light to a dark world. She has converted the sinner and moulded the saint. Her children have dedicated themselves entirely to God, and have learnt more and more of His doctrine, by the performance of His most holy and adorable Will. Wise doctors and saintly children have borne testimony to the truth of Her teaching, and to the Divinity of that Faith which, at the peril of salvation, She ever calls upon the world to accept. Thus, therefore, is it reasonable that this illustrious Society should be entirely credited in the witness She bears to the revealed truths from Heaven.

Surely, then, when considerations such as these are pressed home to us, we should ever seek after the great Theological Virtue Faith; and if we do not already possess it, implore God so to dispose our hearts that every deficiency may be in Him most abundantly supplied, and every defect remedied. Not a dead Faith, but a living. A lively and active Faith, that pierces into the invisible things of God, and renders them familiar and acceptable to the soul. Such a Faith as this is the source of all good. It retains

us in the Presence of God. It ever teaches us to watch and pray. It encourages us to hope and to love. It imparts a hatred and horror for sin, and it arms us,—as with a shield,—against all our spiritual enemies. It opens to us the gates of Heaven. The absence of it is the source of all evils, as well to individuals in particular as to Christendom in general. Men too often forget that they have immortal souls; that there is a God, a Death, a Judgment, a Heaven, a Hell;—that God's All-seeing Eye ever rests upon them, and that one day in the future will decide their everlasting state for weal or for woe. Their Faith is dead, and some miserable opinion has taken its place, which beguiles, flatters, and ruins, as the future shall most surely determine. God grant that we, on the other hand, may heartily seek and desire a firm and true Faith! God grant that its seed may take root downward, and bear fruit upwards, so that the reward of Faith may be ours when the Judge comes to give to every man according as his work has been!

II. And now abideth Faith, Hope, Charity.
The second Divine or Theological Virtue is

Hope,—no less necessary than Faith for our eternal salvation. For, as by Faith we believe in God, and all that He has revealed; so by Hope we put our whole trust and confidence in Him, and in all that He has promised. Faith builds upon the immutable truth of God;—Hope upon His Omnipotence, goodness, promises, mercy, and loving-kindness. Faith accepts every detail taught as coming from the Truth Himself,—He Who can neither deceive nor be deceived: Hope looks for all good from Him, as an inexhaustible source of every good and perfect gift; assuredly confident that on His part He will not fail of shewing mercy—bestowing innumerable gifts and imparting manifold graces through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. If we, on our part, fail not of seeking Him earnestly, and doing the works which He looks for at our hands, all will be well.

Next to Faith, Hope is, perhaps, the brightest light of the soul, shedding forth lustrous rays, and revealing the glories of Heaven. Hope comforts the soul under all the afflictions of this life; supports us in our labours and distresses; encourages us to struggle onwards in our mortal journey;

raises us far above this world and all its toils; and fixes our thoughts upon the world to come. Therefore should we “lay hold upon the Hope set before us, which Hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the Forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus made an High Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedeck.”

Again: the Theological Virtue, Hope, keeps the golden mean between the two extremes of despair, on the one hand, and presumption on the other;—both held to be sins against the Holy Ghost, because of the obstruction they cause to the full freedom and operation of the graces of the Spirit of God. Despair by renouncing the side of God and the championship of Christ, as well as by deliberately neglecting the soul’s salvation; and presumption, by vainly looking for salvation without caring to use the appointed means for obtaining it. Despair and presumption are the Scylla and Charybdis of our voyage—the one wilfully closes the gate of prayer, and excludes all other means of grace; the other chooses a way to Heaven opposed to God’s determination, and where

no graces are dispensed. When we remember, therefore, how good a God we have, so abundant in mercies towards those who call upon Him; Who created us; Who redeemed us; and Who has blessed us with abundant promises; surely we should never either despond or despair. On the other hand, we should not look for more than He has promised, or expect to find Him by walking in the broad and uncertain way.

Furthermore: Hope, like Faith, serves effectually for arming the soul for her spiritual warfare, and for the overthrow and extermination of her many enemies; because, by means of this Virtue are we made strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. We exchange our weakness for His Almighty Power. And thus, having God with us and for us, we march to the battle with vigour and courage, fighting our way to Heaven in spite, not only of flesh and blood, but of the principalities and powers of darkness, and of all the legions of hell. And, hand in hand with our firm confidence in God, must there exist an entire distrust of ourselves; for if we trust to our own strength, we shall find it nought but weakness; and if we build on any foundation but that of

God, it will turn out but shifting sand. The man who knew the sayings of Christ and did them, built his house upon a rock. The rain descended, the floods came, the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock. So shall it be with those who own this blessed Virtue. They will depend wholly upon God; they will be unlike some who, though apparently men of good-will, make little or no progress in the way to eternal life, because they trust too much to themselves, to their own good resolutions, and to their own unassisted strength, and are not sufficiently divested of all self-confidence. They will become more and more practically and sensibly alive to their own nothingness, misery, and sin; and so,—hoping for all good from God, and being ever mistrustful of themselves,—will ever strive to work out their salvation with fear and trembling.

III. Thirdly, and finally. And now abideth Faith, Hope, Charity, these three; but the greatest of these is Charity. The greatest of these is Charity. This Virtue consists in loving God above all things; with our whole heart and soul;

with our whole mind and strength, and our neighbour as ourselves. We should love God because He is the Lord: that is, the Eternal, the Self-Existent, the Incomprehensible. He is the Creator and absolute Ruler of the whole universe; of all things visible and invisible; infinitely powerful, good, beautiful and wise; infinite, too, in all His perfections. Moreover, He is our God. He is our first beginning and last end; our Father, our Friend, our continual Benefactor; the Source of every good, both for Time and Eternity. He created thee. He redeemed thee. He regenerated thee. His love has given thee the mystery of the Eucharist, and the graces of the Spirit. Shalt not thou, then, strive to love Him with all thine heart? And this love must be a love of preference; that is, we must love Him more than aught else besides. Neither pleasure nor honour; interest, nor our own wills, should render us guilty of treason against Him, by preferring the creature to the Creator, Who is God, blessed for evermore. Compared with God the whole world, — yea, even all creation, — is as nothing; and should never be balanced against Him.

We should love God, therefore, with our whole heart. "My son, give Me thine heart." It should die to itself, by mortification and self-denial, that thus it may be consecrated wholly and entirely to Him. And this is most just and necessary. It is just because it is His by Baptism, for then was our state changed. Being by nature born in sin, and the children of wrath, we were thereby made the children of grace. So is it a rank injustice if any part be alienated from its rightful owner; for God will not admit a divided heart. He will not suffer a rival in His Kingdom, nor a partner in His throne. Therefore let neither worldly pride, nor fleshly lusts be associated with God in thine heart. Part with the creature and cleave to the Creator,—and love Him with thy whole heart.

And with our whole soul too; that is, not alone by our affections, but by employing all the powers of our soul in His Divine service. Our understandings should be ever directed by the light of love into the way of truth. Our memories should be fresh with the recollections of His love. Our words and actions, our thoughts and desires, should ever be guided and actuated by this Divine

Charity. And, as the will is the ruling principle of the soul, so amongst its many powers ought it to be consecrated to the love of God. In Him alone will she find herself happy, who desires to become an eternal servant of Divine Charity, and offers a constant sacrifice of her liberty to the All-wise and Ever-loving Will of her Creator. Even as it was with our Blessed Lord: “Then said I, Lo I come, in the volume of the book it is written of Me, that I should fulfil Thy Will, O My God; I am content to do it, yea, Thy Law is within My Heart.” Thus the Will of His Eternal Father was the continual object of His love; the subject of all His thoughts; the motive of all His words and actions. He loved It so that It was His very food,—“Nevertheless not My Will but Thine be done,”—And at last, in love, He laid down His life for Its sake. Therefore should we strive to imitate our Blessed Saviour, and render in love our whole souls to God.

We should also love Him with all our mind. The mind being the seat of thought, and consequently of meditation and consideration, to love God thus is to have our thoughts ever directed towards Him; daily

to meditate upon His truth ; to walk always as in His Presence ; and ever to practise recollectedness ; turning all our thoughts to Him. For this is reasonable and just. God is always remembering us. His watchful Eye rests ever upon us. From all Eternity,—cherishing us, with infinite love,—have we ever had a place in His Eternal Mind. Therefore should He have a place in ours. Let us forget our useless toys, therefore, our wild imaginations, our idle amusements, and think ever of the Great and Good God. For a remembrance of His Presence is a most powerful restraint to preserve us from evil ; a perpetual spur to urge us along the road of virtue ; a counsel in our doubts ; a comfort in our sorrows ; a defence against all our enemies ; a protection in all our dangers : enlivening our Faith ; deepening our Hope ; and increasing our Charity, by ever keeping us in the company of God, and leading our minds to the Source and Author of every good.

Finally, we must love God with all our strength. We were made by Him, and for Him alone. The whole fund is His, therefore also ought to be the whole produce. The tree is His, therefore should the fruit be

His likewise. We should constantly strive more and more, with increasing vigour, to love God. We should seek after perfection in every ordinary occupation and daily duty. Whether we eat, or drink, or whatever we do, we should do all to the glory of God. The meanest action in life is ennobled by a pure intention. So that, in order to love God with all our strength,—by the perfection of ordinary deeds and by purity of intention,—we should ever strive to sanctify them by aspirations of Divine Love. On all occasions our souls should be turned towards our Beloved,—“ My Beloved is mine, and I am His,”—offering ourselves to Him ; rejoicing in His glory, and asking for an extension of the Kingdom of His Love, as well in our own hearts as throughout all the world.

God is Love. He loved us first, and that love is eternal. He will never leave us, nor forsake us. Having loved His Own, He will love them unto the end. Most pure, and most generous ; most constant and disinterested is His Love. Eternal and infinite, continual and all-perfect. If thou strivest, then, to love Him in return, thou shalt be loved for ever and ever.

But the greatest of these is Charity.

Having learnt to love God above all things, we shall be found loving our neighbour as ourselves. The two are necessary to salvation. "If a man say, I love God and hateth his brother, he is a liar, for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God Whom he hath not seen. And this commandment have we from Him, that he who loveth God, love his brother also." St. Paul, in the Gospel for to-day, declares that though we speak with the tongues of men and of angels and have not Charity, it is nothing worth. "Though I have the gift of prophecy," he writes, "and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not Charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not Charity, it profiteth me nothing." And what St. Paul teaches us here had been specially enforced on a previous occasion by our Blessed Lord Himself: "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another as I have loved you." There may be Faith and Hope, but until Charity comes likewise is there a yawning void. The greatest of these is

Charity. It is indeed a heavenly Virtue, as well because its full perfection is manifested there where neither Faith nor Hope are required, as also because the eternal Charity of the Saints is no small portion of their everlasting felicity. Their love of God is their essential bliss. Their love of one another in Him, and the joy which they experience at each other's happiness, multiplies the bliss of their heaven, as it were, to as many fold as there are blissful spirits round God's glorious Throne. Here below, too, the greatest of these is Charity. For when approaching to perfection it brings with it joy indescribable. Mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace kiss each other. Therefore should we seek after true Charity ; striving to love according to God, and with relation to God ; perceiving and loving in our neighbours the image of God ; regarding them as created by and for Him ; as redeemed by the Precious Blood of Christ Jesus ; and, therefore, to be specially and heartily loved for His Sake.

The greatest of these is Charity. We must love our neighbours as ourselves ; striving to be as intent upon their welfare as upon our own, and as tender in our love for

them as for ourselves. We should seek out the poor and needy, the forlorn and the outcast, and love them for the sake of Christ. In them we may serve and love Him. Both as to body and soul should we strive to supply their needs, and so prove that the love of God dwelleth in us. We should, furthermore, love our enemies, do good to those who hate us, and pray for those who despitefully use us, and persecute us. Such a Virtue as this is not of earth, but of Heaven. It has to do with God. It is Theological: it is Divine. If we have it not, let us seek for it in earnest and hearty prayer, now while it is called day. Let there be added to Faith, Hope; to Hope, obedience; to obedience, patience; and to patience, humility. Then let Charity crown the whole. The greatest of these is Charity. And if we follow Him Who is the great pattern of love, the Good Shepherd — He Who came to seek and to save those who were lost; He Who shed His Most Precious Blood on the Cross of Calvary, and feeds us with Himself at the Altar of His Charity, He will increase those virtues day by day, and year by year. So that when Faith is swallowed up in sight,—Time in Eternity,

and Hope can no longer be,—Charity—deep, abiding, perfect, eternal, divine—may be the blessed reward of those who have done God's Will. Which may He, Who is Love, grant to each of us for the sake of Him Who so loved us as to die for our sins, and to rise again for our justification ! Amen.

Ash Wednesday.

A REVIEW OF THE PAST.

“Then thou shalt remember thy ways and be ashamed.”—
EZEKIEL, xvi. 61.

OF the gifts wherewith God has been pleased to endow our human nature, few are more important to us, few (if rightly used) more elevating than the memory. To live merely in the present is the life of brute beasts. To look back upon the past, as also to look forward to the future, is the privilege of men and angels. We might even speak of it as existing in the Almighty, as being a part of the Divine Attribute of Omniscience, if we knew enough of the nature of the Godhead to be able to assert with confidence that past, present, and future can, in any strictness of speech, be applied to His all-perfect knowledge.

Upon memory depends in great measure the very life of a family, a nation, or an institution. None of these, until they have a past to which they can recur, seem to

exercise the fullest influence, either for good or for evil, of which they are capable.

To foster such memories histories are written, monuments are upraised, festivals are instituted. One of the most justly celebrated of Greek historians begins his work by stating its object to be the perpetuation in men's memories of the great achievements wrought both by his own countrymen and by the foreigners who warred against them. Instances of local or national commemorations, and again of memorial edifices, are too obvious to need that I should specially point them out.

For indeed without going beyond the pages of Holy Scripture, we may find abundant notice of such memorials, under both the Mosaic and the Christian dispensations. "And Joshua said unto them, Pass over before the Ark of the Lord your God into the midst of Jordan, and take you up every man of you a stone upon his shoulder, according unto the number of the tribes of the children of Israel: that this may be a sign among you, that when your children ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What mean ye by these stones? Then ye shall answer them, That

the waters of Jordan were cut off before the Ark of the covenant of the Lord; when it passed over Jordan, the waters of Jordan were cut off: and these stones shall be a memorial unto the children of Israel for ever." Thus, too, the censers of Korah and his company were made into broad plates of the altar, as a memorable warning to witness against their sin. Thus, too, the Jews of a later day kept the feast of Purim, and the dedication of the temple by Judas Macabæus. But above all was their great festival of the Passover a memorial: "Remember this day, in which ye came out from Egypt: and it shall be for a sign unto thee upon thine hand, and for a memorial between thine eyes."

And so, too, among Christians, the Catholic Creeds are memorials, and our Churches, and the sign of the Cross. Both Testaments are memorials: and the Holy Sacraments themselves,—which are channels of grace in the present, and sources of hope for the future,—are at the same time inseparably linked with the past. Holy Baptism reminds us of the pierced Side, and the burial of Christ our Lord, through which He passed to His joyful resurrection. And at the institution

of the Holy Eucharist was it not said, "This do (or offer) in remembrance of me?" "For"—as St. Paul comments on these solemn words,—“For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord’s death till He come.”

I turn from institutions to the persons of whom, and for whose sake, they are made.

The importance of the memory is fully recognised both by secular teachers (as is shown in the whole process of education), and by religious teachers likewise. Some of the last-named have tried to trace a kind of image of the Holy Trinity in man’s soul, inasmuch as it, too, though but one being, admits of a threefold partition into memory, reason, and will.* And whether this division be philosophical or not, it at any rate shows how much stress such thinkers laid upon the functions of the memory. The importance of those functions is indeed strongly impressed on us by the void which is

* *E.g.*, St. Bernard, “Beata illa et sempiterna Trinitas . . . creavit quamdam trinitatem ad imaginem et similitudinem suam, animam scilicet rationalem; quæ in eo præfert vestigium quoddam illius summæ Trinitatis, quod ex memoriâ, ratione, et voluntate constat.” (Serm. de Diversis XLV.) I do not think that this division, *philosophically viewed*, would have been allowed by Aquinas or the early Fathers.

created when they are weak or perishing. How common is it to hear of the difficulty of teaching such and such a one summed up in the words "He has no memory." What surer sign of the decay of all man's faculties than to find that his memory is fast failing?

But it must be admitted that, even when at its best, the memory does not always seem to be entirely under our own control. We are asked for the address of a friend, and at the moment we find it impossible to recall the name of the street or village where he may be found. Afterwards, at a moment when we are not consciously thinking upon the subject, it occurs to us. Oftentimes, too, does the remembrance of past sin or folly arise, as in dreams, though not only then, without any link of association that we can trace. And, sometimes,—thank God! a brighter recollection of something past, that came from Him, is permitted to arise with astonishing vividness upon our mental vision. Occasionally, moreover, we seem to have transacted, as if almost it were in a pre-existent state, some scene in which we are taking part. These things I leave as mysteries, only observing, in passing, that they

are intimately connected with the Christian doctrine respecting the action of God upon the souls He has created, and the influence and ministry of the good and of the evil angels.

But, in a general way, the memory, though naturally stronger in some than others, is, in a great measure, under the dominion of the will, and is capable of considerable culture. A celebrated philosophic divine recommends us to make a good arrangement of that which we wish to recollect, so that the reminiscence of any single point may lead us onward until we grasp the whole; and to be really anxious and eager upon the subject; and, further, frequently to meditate concerning it.*

Now this gift of memory may be employed innocently, or wickedly, or religiously.

It is employed innocently when it is exercised upon lawful and harmless knowledge, with a view to the development of the talents God has entrusted to it, or for the instruc-

* S. Thos. Aquinas, Summa Theol. Secunda Secundæ. Qu. XLIX., Art. 1 ad 2. I have omitted his apparent reference to the purely intellectual question of the aid to memory known as *memoria technica*.

tion of others, or for any use in our callings, or even for recreation. True, indeed, it is that secular knowledge is not grace, nor instruction religion, nor recreation devotion. But it is a great thing for the soul, unable as it is to keep the height it may gain in happier moments, to be able to fall back upon fitting duties and (in their proper time and place) on guiltless pleasures. All these things are at least capable of sanctification. "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

It is employed wickedly, when it is so choked up with the things of sense and of time, as to forget those of eternity. "They forgot God their Saviour, Who had done so great things for them in Egypt." "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the people that forget God." Or when it is being stored with ungodly sights and sounds, bad pictures, lewd songs and the like. Or, again, when it calls to mind, with pleasure, deeds that should be thought upon with shame, and thus, in imagination at least, re-enacts the sin.* And thus are they in danger of

* "while she brooded thus
And grew half guilty in her thoughts again."
Idylls of the King.—Guenevere.

arriving at the condition of those condemned by the Apostle, "who, knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them."

It is employed religiously when it calls up the thoughts of the great doctrines of the faith, the promises of God, the work of Christ, the death of Saints, and, in short, "whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report."

Such reminiscences do not spring from the powers of our own fallen nature. They are the fruit of grace, the work of the Holy Spirit. "The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, Whom the Father will send in My Name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." Listen to the words of one whose spirit was thus furnished. "My memory is the eye of my mind; and to think upon the saints is, in some sense, to behold them." And thus do we have our portion, and, in truth, no scanty one, in the land of the living, if only our affections accompany our memories as they ought. For

our conversation is in heaven, yet not in the same way as theirs is. They have their substance there, we only our desires; they are there in presence, we only in memory. When shall we also be added to our fathers? When we shall in our very essence be made present to them. For this is the first desire that the memory of the saints excites, or rather incites, in us, that we may enjoy a society so much to be desired,—that we may become worthy of being their companions and fellow-citizens, that we may be allied with the assembly of the Patriarchs, the bands of the Prophets, the senate of the Apostles, the abundant army of Martyrs, the college of Confessors, the choirs of Virgins, and, finally, to be united and to rejoice in the communion of all Saints. The remembrances of single saints, like single sparks, yea, rather like glowing torches, inflame devout minds to the desire of their sight and their embrace.*

But there is, as you well know, brethren, another religious use of the memory of a very different character. We may direct its gaze, not only without ourselves, to the contemplation of God and His Saints, but also

* S. Bernard in Fest. Omn. Sanct. Sermo V.

to the sadder sight of our inner self to the recalling of our past offences. Such is the use of memory implied by the Psalmist, when he says, "I called mine own ways to remembrance, and turned my feet unto Thy testimonies." Such the prophecy of Ezekiel, in my text, spoken to Jerusalem, and therein to every penitent soul until the end of time: "Then thou shalt remember thy ways and be ashamed;" and again, "then shall ye remember your ways and all your doings, wherein ye have been defiled: and ye shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for all your evils that ye have committed."

Brethren, I have been requested to address you upon this last-named use of our memories — namely, that is, as they may be brought to bear upon the *review of our past life*. What I have to say will, I know, be very imperfect; and, I much fear, most unworthy of so weighty a subject. But it may be true, so far as it goes, and with God's blessing it may prove not wholly useless. Pray now for that blessing, both on yourself and on him who speaks to you.

The first thing to be done in any

attempt to review our past life is to try and place ourselves, as it were, in the immediate Presence of God. "I made my humble petition in Thy Presence," says the Psalmist.* We must desire to see things as God sees them, for His is the only true and enduring way. We must desire, if it be possible, to forestal His judgment, "for if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged." Let us then thank God for all the mercies we have enjoyed: both those which we have in common with many of our fellow Christians, and those which have been special to ourselves. The thought of His goodness will make us the more keenly alive to our own disobedience and ingratitude.

And then come in with good effect two of those rules to which I have already referred as being applicable to the general culture of the memory, namely, the principle of arrangement and the principle of earnestness.

The principle of arrangement: for our life is to most of us, on looking back, a confused and tangled web, and without some clue we cannot hope to unravel it. Let us then divide our past life into periods such

* Ps. cxix. 58, Prayer Book.

as that of childhood, boyhood, manhood, life under tutelage, life since we became our own masters, life before and since marriage, life before and since the adoption of our calling or profession. Then let us test our conduct in each division by the Ten Commandments, spiritually interpreted as by our Blessed Lord in His Sermon on the Mount, by our baptismal vow, or by the principle suggested in the twelfth Chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans.* We may also, with advantage, examine how we have stood with reference to the Love of God, the love of our neighbour, and of ourselves; this being, indeed, only another way of viewing the Ten Commandments; a way taught by our Lord Himself, and in the Ten Commandments.

And as regards earnestness, it is of course the condition of success in whatever we are about. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." "I made my humble petition in Thy Presence with my whole heart." "If from thence thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find Him, if thou seek Him with all thy heart and with

* See St. Matthew, chap. v., especially such verses as 27, 28, 43, 44, &c.

all thy soul." Trace back your life to that early sin which has probably been the fruitful parent of so much mischief—pride, deceit, impurity, envy, sloth, jealousy,—alas! how soon do they begin, how long do their miserable results affect our subsequent career!

It is indeed no pleasant nor easy task :

Surely the time is short—
Endless the toil and art—
To brighten for the ethereal court
An earth-soil'd, drudging heart.

The eloquent author to whom I have before referred, compares the memory of the sin-polluted soul to blotting-paper thoroughly stained with ink, which is of too flimsy a texture to bear the scratch of the knife, lest, in the operation, its very substance be destroyed.*

In proportion as the mind and conscience have been defiled does the work become difficult. "The very faculty which has to judge is itself diseased," says a heathen.† And yet the very consciousness of past carelessness and sin is something. The soul that knows that she is "wretched and


* S. Bern. De Convers. ad Clericos, Cap. XV.

† "Id ipsum, quod judicat, ægrotat."—CICERO.

miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked," is the more likely to come with sorrowing and humble penitence to One Who hath said, "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out."

And here I would venture upon two cautions. I have spoken of meditation as a help to memory, and such it undoubtedly is: but it may be questioned whether it were wise to apply it too closely to the case before us. By all means cultivate meditation as an aid to memory, in the matter of the objective truths of our most Holy Faith. Meditate, too, if you will, on the seven deadly sins, and the nature of venial sin, with especial reference to your own life and conduct. But to make our own sins a frequent subject of special and direct meditation in the same way may not only expose us to the peril of not hating them as we should, but likewise induce a morbid self-consciousness, which is a very different thing from the truly divine gift of self-knowledge.

And, secondly, while we pray for true insight, that we may not be as whited sepulchres, let us not rush into another kind of hypocrisy, and charge ourselves with crimes from which by God's mercy we have been



hitherto preserved. St. Augustine in his Confessions, amidst all his admissions, thanks God for the good things which He did still deign to preserve for him during the time of boyhood. The absolution in the Holy Eucharist not only invokes God's pardon of our sins, but likewise His confirmation of us in all goodness.*

But as you recall your sins do not say to yourself: True: I was wrong, but then such a one was very provoking: in this matter, I was tempted from without: in that, neglected and so forth. God knows all our excuses far better than we can tell them. He of His mercy will make all allowance for us that is compatible with His Justice and His Love.

And if it please Him, whether through the ministry of His commissioned servants or by some secret intimation of His Holy Spirit, to convey to our souls any sense of His pardoning Mercy, let us not on that account neglect to review, say in each succeeding Lent, our past lives; just as in Advent we should summon up the events of the past year, and every evening those of the past day. The more we are conscious of His Love the more deeply should we regret that we ever outraged it so fearfully. The Prodigal, when the Father

* Confess. Lib. I.

met him, still made his humble confession : and such, too, is surely the teaching of the great Prophet from whom my text is taken, “ That thou mayest remember and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more for shame ; when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God.”

Some philosophers have maintained that *memory* and *imagination* and *hope* are essentially one faculty. I believe that there is truth, in such a view, and that it may be illustrated by those words of St. Bernard which I read to you concerning the memory of God’s Saints. May it at least prove practically true to us ! From the memory of our sins let us try to pass in imagination to Mount Calvary, and thence derive a holy hope. Despair is a deadly sin as well as presumption. There is mercy with Thee, O Lord, therefore shalt Thou be feared. Have mercy upon us, O Lord, and so shall we gain pardon for our sins. Give us ever to perform Thy Most Holy Will. Blot out the handwriting that is against us. Look upon the Face of Thine Anointed, and so,—after true contrition and acceptance,—may we hope for everlasting life !

C*.

The First Sunday in Lent.

OUR BLESSED LORD'S TEMPTATION.

"For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted."—HEBREWS ii. 18.

WE take the word temptation with us, whenever we draw near to God to offer the Lord's Prayer. Perhaps this very familiarity with the word may have taken away something of this significance. We say, "Lead us not into temptation," (too often at least,) without having in our minds a distinct picture of what that thing is into which we implore that we may not be led, going on immediately to the kindred petition, "But deliver us from evil." But now let us think a little of this word, and we shall find a stream of awful thoughts about awful realities passing into our minds. We shall see what temptation means,—that it is the effort of an evil being, the enemy of ourselves and of our God, to seduce us from God's ways into his own, which are the ways that plunge men into the blackness of ever-

lasting darkness. He will appear to our minds as the restless spirit in the parable, going up and down, seeking some abode which he can thoroughly possess, some soul which he can utterly ruin. To and fro throughout the world he keeps up that terrible unceasing search, which the Apostle describes as the hunt of a lion for its prey. He attacks different souls with different methods of persuasion: he can become in a fearful way "all things to all men," can put on divers disguises, speak in divers tones, offer divers baits. It is not for nothing that the destroyer has lived for all these ages in a state of ever-growing hostility towards God, and eagerness to detach men from His side. Assuredly the increase of his malice has been the increase of his subtlety, and he can bring to bear upon his object the vast resources of an experience which has been accumulating since the day when he brought death into our world. Such is the "murderer from the beginning," the tempter who, as St. Paul so well knew, can so often make "vain" the labours of an Apostle; and we—we whom he assails—we know full well what success he has in dealing with our moral and spiritual weakness, our blindness, and self-

delusion, our weariness in the things of God, our perpetual tendency to give up the effort of well-doing. And the result—does not *that* too stand out clearly before us? Back-sliding, declension, spiritual deadness, return to the mire of old sins, gradual hardening of the heart, and (unless Divine Mercy intervene) the dying out of the Lamp of God within our souls.

Temptation, then, is one of the most terrible realities of human life: a word which ought to make us tremble, as we shudder at the name of some agonizing disease, if we are told that it is threatening us. And now, if we turn to the text, we are reminded that, in some way or other, He who is our Head, has been subjected to this doom: He, the Word Incarnate, the Saviour and sole Hope of the world, “hath suffered being tempted.” We know that He was so, and we plead the fact to Christ Himself as often as we say the Litany, entreating our Good Lord to *deliver us by His temptation*. On this most mysterious point in our Blessed Lord's history, let us now reverently fix our eyes, as we should fix them on His Passion in the sacred season which commemorates His Death. For assuredly the temptation of Christ was,

in a very real sense, part of His Passion: it was a mystery of humiliation and anguish, too dark for us to penetrate, but still claiming our dutiful and adoring attention as part of the homage and devotion which are due to Him from those for whom He suffered.

But first of all the question will force itself upon us, How could Christ be tempted? We know that He was not a human person like ourselves, but a Divine Person who had taken our humanity into union with His Godhead. He was God, strictly, literally, verily and indeed. It was not the case of a Prophet or other saint, highly favoured by God, and greatly possessed by the Presence of the Holy Spirit. The Faith makes a wide severance between this case and the case of our Blessed Lord, when it teaches that He was Himself the Almighty Creator, and that as His Flesh was the Flesh of God, so all His acts were the acts of God. Well, then, how could God the Son be tempted?

Let us put off, so to say, the shoes from our feet. We are treading on very holy ground. It is most unsafe even to speak of such a transcendent mystery as "the mystery of godliness," in any temper of mind but

that of worship; or without an earnest prayer that He, who is at once our God and our Brother, will mercifully rescue us from all irreverent and heretical thoughts about Him. Thus guarded, let us say that of course He could not be tempted *altogether* as we are tempted, or as any creature ever has been tempted since the fall of the rebellious Angels. Of course, He could not be tempted in His Godhead, any more than His Godhead could feel the scourge and the nails. Of course, He could only be tempted in His Manhood, although the things which He did or endured in either of His two Natures, are rightly called the acts of God, because both the Natures belong to a Divine Person. Equally, of course, His Manhood could not be tempted with the same risk, if we may use such a term, as is the case with ourselves. If it may be said, without irreverence, there was no possibility, no *chance* whatever, that the devil should succeed with Jesus Christ. Why? For the reason stated above as causing the difficulty: because the Manhood in Him was truly united, without confusion, but without separation, to the Godhead. Thus, although human nature, existing by itself, *without* such an union,

would have been liable to fall, yet existing, as it did in our Lord from the very moment of His Conception, *in* such an union, it was preserved from all such liability. The human Soul of God Incarnate was wrapped around by the glorious Presence of the Godhead, was bathed in the light of the Divine holiness, was upheld, by the simple fact that it was *His* Soul, from the slightest danger of stumbling. How far, then, could temptation extend in this case? We may gain some light by remembering that for the completion of every single sin that we commit,—whether it be a sin of the mind, or of the lips, or of action,—three things are necessary. The thought of sinning must be presented to the mind: this is called “suggestion.” Secondly, this thought must be received with more or less of satisfaction, or, as it is called, “pleasure.” Thirdly, the man’s will must agree to commit the sin: this is what is called “consent,” and by this the evil is completed. Now, obviously, the Soul of Christ could only—being, as we have seen, the Soul of God Incarnate,—be affected by the first of these processes, because it is only the first, that is, “suggestion,” which can take place without some degree of sin: if we go on

to the second process, obviously sinfulness begins,—for there it is that we find a “pleasure” in what is evil, and that pleasure is of course sinful. As then Christ’s Soul could give no “consent” to the idea of doing evil, so neither could It find any satisfaction or “pleasure” in the idea: rather was that idea more thoroughly hateful and abominable to that Spotless Manhood, than fallen manhood can ever imagine. But the “suggestion” could be made, that is, the tempter could present to the Mind of Christ the idea of ambition, or of presumption, or of simply unlawful gratification of appetite,—without causing thereby any degree of sinfulness in the Mind before which he placed the idea. We know that our Lord repelled the idea thus presented with immediate, unmistakable, absolute refusal. Therefore, we say that He was tempted by the devil, inasmuch as He was exposed to the suggestions of evil, which the devil brought before Him: and that this contact with the enemy, this exposure to his abhorred presence, to the sound of his accursed voice trying to lure Christ Himself from His Father’s ways,—(although most likely the devil did not at all fully understand with Whom he was dealing,)—must

have been, to the Undefined and Perfect One, a profound and agonizing humiliation. The greater the holiness, the more loathsome and afflicting must the idea of sin be : and the more we ponder this, the more shall we enter into the force of the declaration, that "He *suffered* being tempted." It was suffering, indeed.

But why did He go through it ? Partly because He had become very Man, and was therefore bound to drink as deep as He could of the cup of man's humiliation and infirmity. He was to make Himself "like unto us in all things, sin only excepted ;" to be *tried* (as the passage I refer to, Hebrews iv. 15, really means), to be "*tried* in all points like as we are, putting sin apart," that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest, capable of being "touched with the feeling of our infirmities," according to that wonderful dispensation of Divine love and equitableness, whereby God the Father also committed unto Him the authority of a Judge, "because He is the Son of Man," and, as such, could sympathize with men. This was one reason ; another was, that He might give us an example of the mode wherein temptation is to be met, that is, by

reliance on, by appeal to, the express Word and Will of God.

Let us now go briefly through the three scenes of this awful event ; their order, as we know, is given differently by St. Matthew and by St. Luke, for in the former the third and last temptation is that of the Mountain, in the latter that of the Pinnacle. It may be more convenient for us practically to follow St. Luke's order, because it puts the deepest and subtlest temptation last of all, and agrees with the order in which St. John ranks "the lust of the flesh," "the lust of the eyes," and "the pride of life." The Church mentions them sometimes in one order, sometimes in another : in the Catechism She speaks of the works of the devil—meaning thereby "the pride of life," the most spiritual temptation of all,—then of the pomps and vanities of the world, then of the lusts of the flesh. But in the solemn reception of a child into Christ's flock, She speaks of "sin," meaning the fleshly sins, of "the world," and of "the devil : " and this corresponds to the language of St. Luke and of St. John. The important thing for us, practically, is to remember that the temptations, as they were set before our Lord, are really the same temptations as St.

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John is speaking of. Our Lord was tempted by the lures of fleshly appetite, of worldly ambition, of spiritual presumption, that is, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life: tempted, of course, in the sense and to the extent indicated already. The Temptations of the Wilderness; of the Mountain, of the Pinnacle, show us respectively the three evils renounced at our Baptism,—the Flesh, the World, the Devil. Let us consider them in this order.

First of all, then, our Blessed Lord, “having fasted forty days and forty nights, was afterward an hungered.” He felt the bodily exhaustion, which would have come upon Him sooner, had it not been till then miraculously kept off. He was faint for want of food. It was a perfectly innocent, natural sensation. Then comes the “suggestion,” that if He is what He calls Himself, the Son of God, it is folly to continue in this exhausted state, which unfits Him for His high duties: it is but right that He should call in to His relief the miraculous powers which must of course belong to the Son of God. “Command this stone that it be made bread.” Why refrain from invoking Thy Father’s aid, or rather from speak-

ing at once as becomes His Son? It must be an easy matter for a Personage of such dignity to turn a stone into food, as Moses called water out of the rock, turning "the flint stone into a springing well;" and what could be so fitting an occasion for such a mandate, as this exhaustion of the most precious vital powers in the whole human family? Speak, then, and of course it will be done; assuredly the Son of God cannot have any doubt of the result—He cannot be unwilling to appeal to His Father's power, as if the appeal would not be answered.

This was the purport of the "suggestion." Our Lord at once answers by a reference to Scripture, to a passage in Deuteronomy (viii. 3), wherein Moses reminds the people that God had humbled them, and suffered them to hunger, and fed them with supernatural food, that He might make them "know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every Word that proceedeth out of the Mouth of the Lord doth man live." Now why does our Lord quote this? He quotes it, and says no more: what does He mean? What is His answer to Satan? It seems to be this:—Thou askest Me to prove My Sonship by working a miracle to relieve My Own

bodily wants. But if I did this, I should be going against the principle of that text in Deuteronomy, which is, that dependence on God for one's own relief is the duty of all His people. Dependence on His Word, that is, on whatever He may order for us or concerning us—this is the path of safety, this is the path of life. Now, this dependence must be entire. It must exclude all impatience. But it would be impatience, it would be distrust of God, if His Messengers were to employ, for their own personal relief, those wondrous powers which they possess, for other ends. Better is it simply to rely on Him, than to do anything which may even look like such impatience and such distrust.

So much for the temptation of the Wilderness: it was a temptation affecting the Flesh, the Body, the lowest part of man: similar to that temptation which beset our first mother when she saw that the fatal tree was "good for food." This is given as a sample of the temptations of bodily appetite: worse specimens of the same class being passed over. For us the lesson is, to depend dutifully and patiently upon God; we are not, of course, forbidden to use all rightful means for our own support, but we

are forbidden to give way to the spirit of impatient selfishness, and to allow mere bodily appetite to weigh more with us than spiritual duty.

We pass on to the temptation which comes second in St. Luke's order; it is the temptation of the world, or of the lust of the eyes, addressed not to the body, but to the soul, and taking place, in this narrative, upon the Mountain. We may suppose that, from the top of a mountain, in the neighbourhood of the Jordan, the enemy of man, by some supernatural power, set before our Lord's eyes, "in a moment of time," a picture, so to speak—a view—a vision of all the glories of earthly empire. "All this power," said he, "I will give thee, and the glory of them, for to me it has been given over, and to whom I will, I give it: if Thou, therefore, wilt worship me, all shall be Thine." This boast and this offer are most mysterious. The boast had evidently some foundation, for our Lord calls Satan the prince, and St. Paul calls him the god, of this world. In some hidden way, we may believe, there was a real dominion, an actual hold over the world's kingdoms, exercised by Satan before the Death of Christ.

But the offer, so awfully undisguised, is still more amazing, by its contrast to the other two addresses of Satan to our Lord, wherein he is careful to refer to God's power and God's promises. There is certainly a mystery here which we cannot penetrate. Satan is speaking out more openly, more as he did when he libelled the Divine intentions in his speech to Eve. Our Lord answers simply and sternly: "Get thee hence, Satan, for it is written (in the words of Deuteronomy vi. 13), Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God:" and He adds, as a thing implied in this, that His worshippers are to worship Him *only*—they must not divide their homage between Him and Satan—He must have all. Now herein we see the great deadliness of the temptation of worldly ambition, or of worldly curiosity, or of the love of power, influence, distinction, of any of the world's pomps or vanities, its imposing magnificence, or its empty pretensions—of all the lures which belong *especially* to the world, and are referred to as "the lust of the eyes," for they all lead us away from the worship of God, and enslave us to the service of the Prince of this world. In other words, if we make ambition, love

of money, or any such worldly motive our guide, we shall inevitably be led to gratify it by the sacrifice of our obedience to God ; and he that makes this sacrifice does really say to Satan, " I will fall down and worship *thee*." Our answer to such suggestions must go to the root of the matter : we must refuse to listen to the world's promises, refuse to make worldly aggrandisement our object, refuse to sacrifice our religious principles for the sake of " getting on in life," simply because we " cannot do this great wickedness and sin against God ;" because to love this present world well enough to make secular success and distinction the goal of our strivings, would be nothing short of apostacy from Him Whom only we must serve.

Lastly, we meet with the temptation which is pre-eminently that of the devil. It is addressed to the most spiritual part of man. Its scene in our narrative is the Pinnacle of the Temple : the lofty wing of the Temple which towered up above the Valley of the Cedron. There the enemy stations our Lord, and seeks to kindle in Him the flame of Spiritual Presumption. If He is the Son of God, surely He is Heir to the

promises which God gave to His faithful servants. He had assured them that His Angels should have them in charge to preserve them from danger, even from stumbling against a stone. Let the Son of God make proof of the promise : let Him leap down from this height, confident that Angels will support Him. This will be an act of Faith most acceptable to His Father.

Now this temptation is evidently that of Spiritual Presumption. Such so-called Faith as this would be not Faith, but impiety, that sort of impiety which is called a tempting of God. So our Lord replies, "It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." To tempt God is to presume upon His goodness : it is practically saying to Him, "I demand that Thou give me an extraordinary mark of favour ;" it is the tempter which asks for a sign, is not content with the gifts which God vouchsafes, demands others which He thinks fit to withhold. He that tempts God, therefore, is, in the strictest sense, undutiful and presumptuous : he acts as if he might take any freedom with his Creator, as if he could not do wrong. It does not mend the matter that he uses pious language, talks of his


faith, and offends by a sin of the spiritual, not the carnal part of his nature. "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord." Thou shalt not go beyond thy duty, and then take for granted that He will keep thee safe. That is just as really irreligious as if thou wert to say openly, I will be a God to myself, I will acknowledge no law but my own will. This is the principle which our Lord takes. It is enough for His purpose; otherwise He might have reminded the tempter that he had omitted to quote the condition on which protection was ensured. "He shall give His Angels charge concerning thee, to keep thee safe:" here Satan had left out what the Scripture added, "In all thy ways," in thy appointed paths of duty,—not if thou ventarest beyond them. And again, He might have said that the person thus protected was to "go upon the lion and adder, to tread down the young lion and the dragon." But what he said was sufficient: sufficient to beat down the enemy: sufficient to keep any of his servants from being lured by presumption thus wearing the mask of piety. St. John calls this presumption, and other spiritual sins akin to it, "the pride of life:" teaching us that pride is its very

essence, that it is a self-exaltation which, whatever form it takes, is utterly opposed to the dutifulness and loyalty of the genuine Child of God.

Thus it is that the three temptations of our Lord comprise all the kinds of temptation which beset the body, the soul, or the spirit of a Christian. It is not that they exhaust all the forms which temptation can take;—of course, as I have said, they only exhibit samples, but these are samples of each of the three kinds. And how are we to be the better for this narrative of what passed between the Son of God and His enemy in the rocky wilderness, on the lonely mountain top, or on the summit of His Own Temple? Surely we learn thereby much about ourselves, much about the guile and the disguises which Satan can employ, much about the varied machinery of his soul-destroying art. Much, too, about the way of meeting Him, by an instantaneous reference to that Word which is the lantern for our feet, to the Law and the Testimony. Let it be our part to pray for that precious gift of spiritual discernment, of a right judgment in all things, and of a single-minded determination to do God's Will,

which alone can stand us in any stead during *our* trial. And let us go for help to Him Who endured that "suffering," and, in consequence, can "succour the tempted," not only in that He understands their case, and can sympathize with them while He sends them Divine aid, but, more particularly, in that this His condescension to "be tempted,"—like all the acts of His Incarnate Life, like His Circumcision, Baptism, Fasting, Passion,—has a special virtue and meritoriousness of its own, which can be applied to the needs of those who invoke Him *by* it. Therefore may we all say, "*By Thy temptation, good Lord, deliver us.*" Pour out upon us that grace which Thy temptation has obtained for us. Come to our aid, strengthening our good purposes, enlightening our consciences against all self-delusion, kindling our affections to choose Thee and abide by the choice. Hold Thou us up, and we shall be safe. Spread Thine arms around us, and rid us of that dark presence that vexes our souls. Help us to answer those deadly suggestions with a ready "Get thee hence," and show Thyself as "the God of Peace," Who "shall bruise Satan under our feet shortly."

B.



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